 PLAYSTATION 3 + PS2 + PSP

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

PS3 LAUNCH GUIDE

Games, tech, Blu-ray, online and the essential 2007 preview!

ISSUE 1 MARCH 2007
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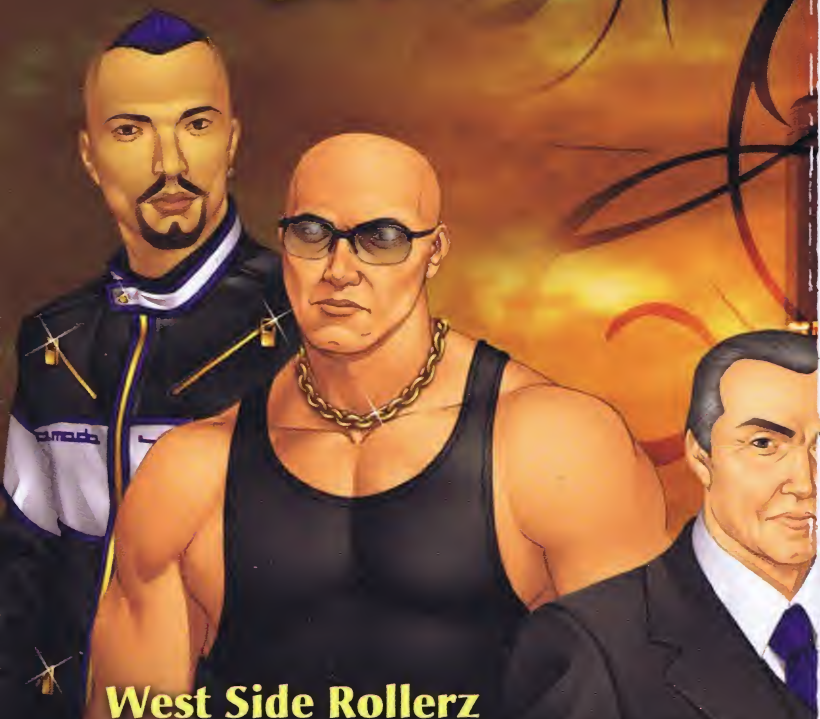
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**EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW
ON PAGE 30!**



West Side Rollerz

The West Side Rollerz rule Stilwater's illegal street-racing circuit. Famously reckless and disorganized, they fuel their lust for fast rides with everything from petty theft to legendary, front-page heists.

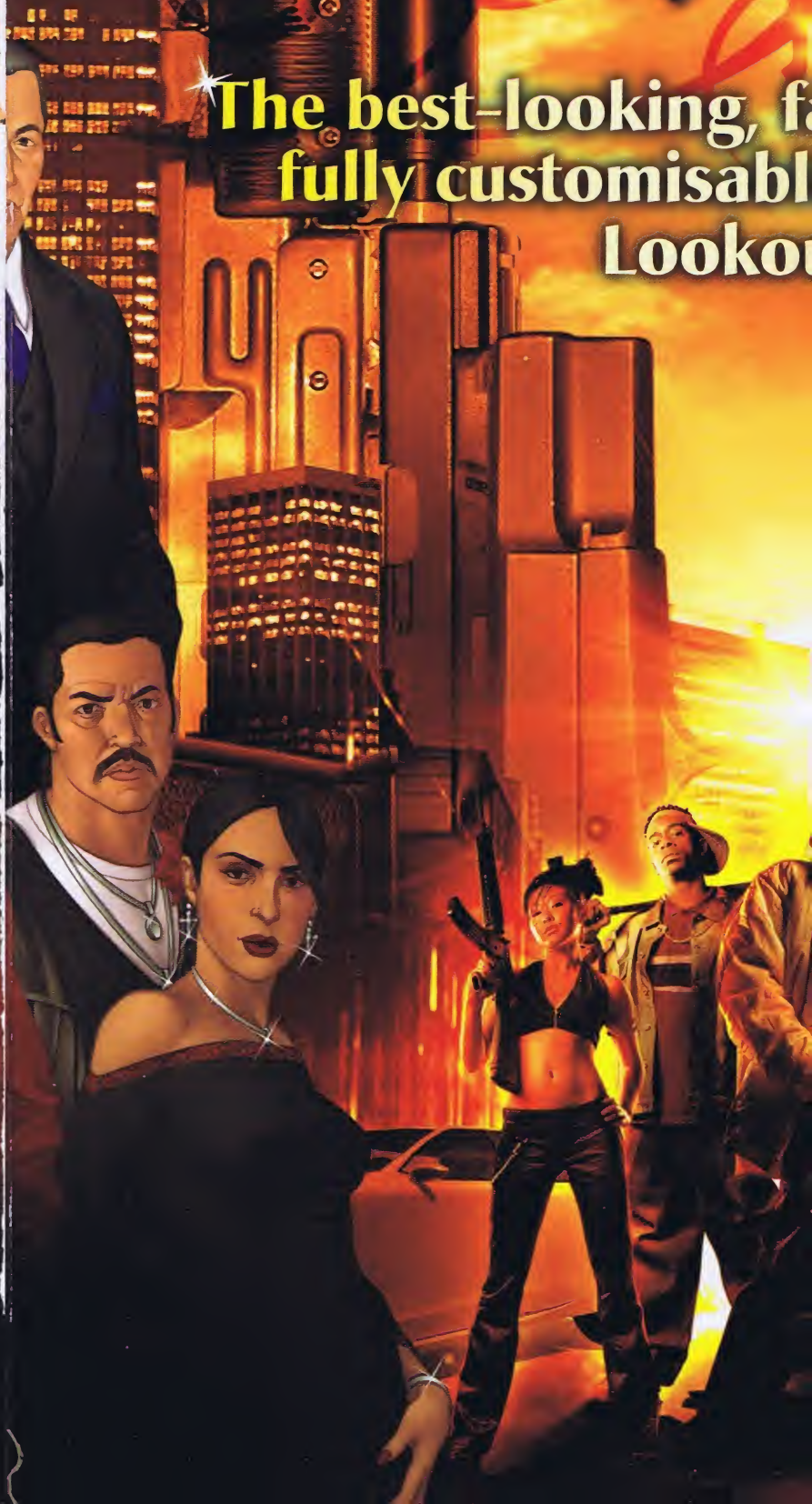


Los Carnales

The Carnales gang is almost as old as Stilwater itself. They are closely associated with major Colombian cartels and have monopolized the Stilwater drug trade. Los Carnales protect their product, their territory and their honor with intimidation and unrepentant violence.

Saints

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S Row



**HITTING
YOUR PS3!**

**Fastest-shooting and
crime rampage!
but GTA!**

Vice Kings

The Vice Kings rake in millions from prostitution, extortion and quasi-legit operations like "Kingdom Come" records. Their reputation is legendary and their pockets are deep—it's rumoured top Stilwater officials are on the Vice Kings' payroll.

3rd Street Saints

The 3rd Street Saints are the crew you need to join in order to change your destiny. Young, brash, and seriously lacking in street cred, it's your mission to help the Saints take back what is rightly theirs and to build your rep on the way to dominating the city of Stilwater.

CHALLENGE AN EMPIRE. LIBERATE A NATION.
CHANGE THE WORLD.



"THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE YEAR."

OFFICIAL PS2

"A TRULY FANTASTIC GAME, BEAUTIFUL."

PLAY

"GAMING JUST DOESN'T GET
ANY BETTER THAN THIS."

OFFICIAL PS2



Moderate
violence

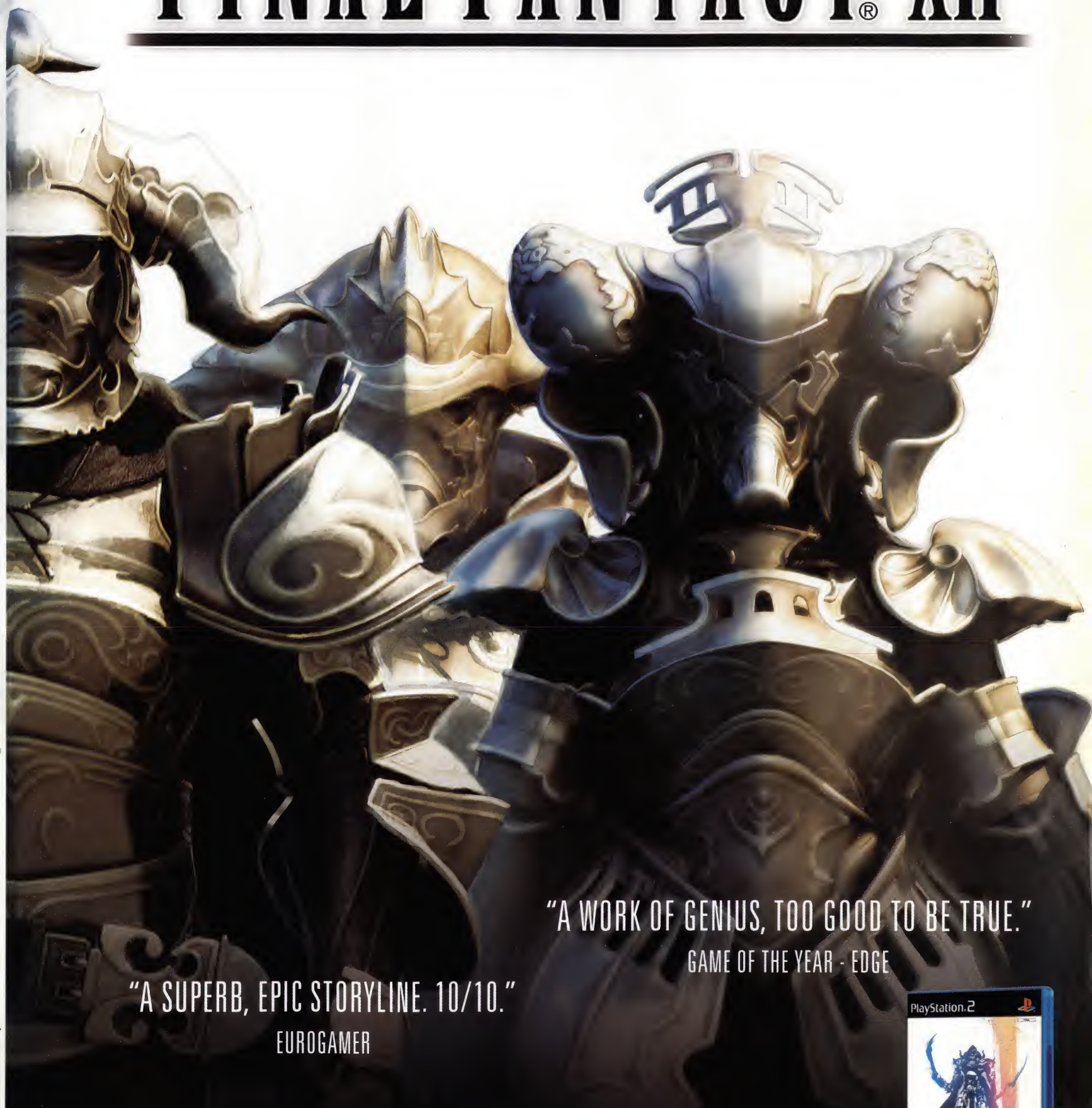
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"A WORK OF GENIUS, TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE."

GAME OF THE YEAR - EDGE

"A SUPERB, EPIC STORYLINE. 10/10."

EUROGAMER

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IN THE WILD, WEIRD WEST.
JUST YOU.



GOD HAND™



Moderate violence,
Coarse language

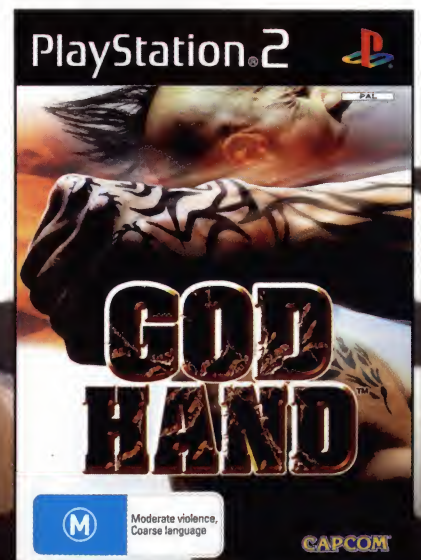
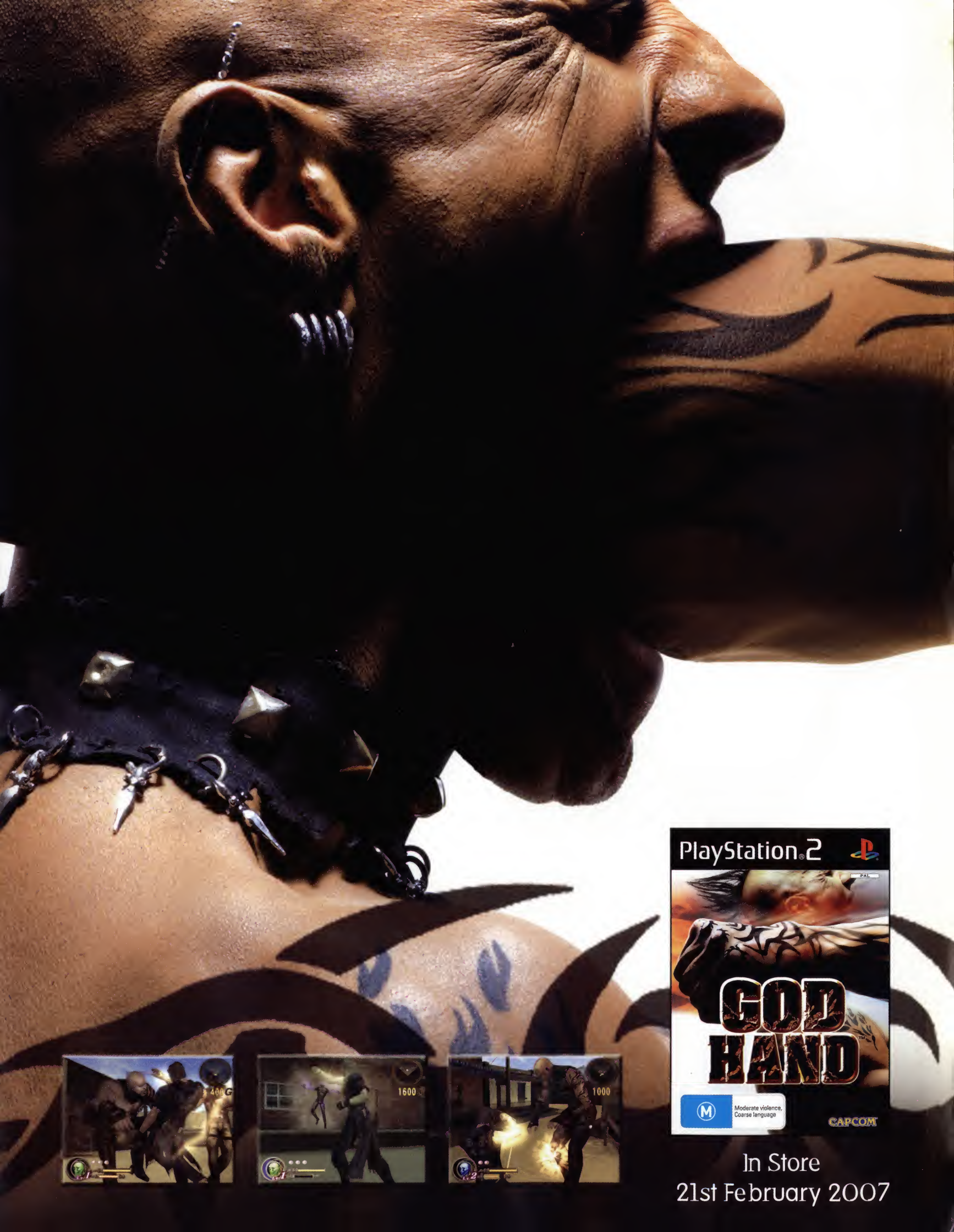
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In Store
21st February 2007

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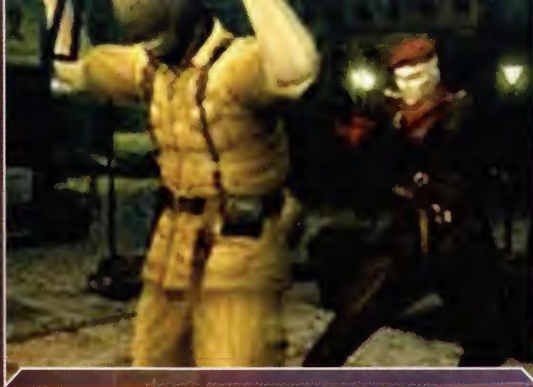
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EDITOR'S LETTER



Phew. That was hard work. I've been editing gaming magazines for ten years now but I've never come close to clocking in as much overtime or pulling in as many favours as I have this month. Covering the PlayStation launch in history across our 150-page super issue has been

a daunting task but it's also been the highlight of my career.

Never before has a gaming launch come close to the staggering leap forward that the PlayStation 3 offers. The PS2 got off to a very strong start thanks to cracking launch titles like *SSX* and *TimeSplitters* and its DVD movie functionality, but when you compare it to the PS3 launch it's not even close to being in the same league. Where *SSX* and *TimeSplitters* were great games, *MotorStorm* and *Resistance* are the sort of seriously incredible experiences you never normally see until a couple of years into a console's life. Either game would be justification enough to buy a PS3 for, but the fact that we've got two of them, and at launch, is just insane.

AND ALL THE REST...

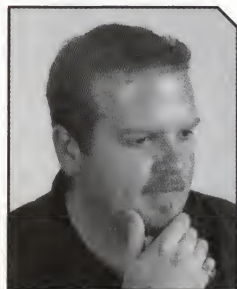
With games of *MotorStorm* and *Resistance*'s calibre your decision to

upgrade to the next generation should already have been made, but just in case you're feeling greedy, there's also another 28 surprisingly accomplished launch titles to gawk at. From superb shooters like *F.E.A.R.*, *Rainbow Six Vegas* and *Call of Duty 3* to intense racers like *Ridge Racer 7*, *Formula 1* and *Full Auto 2* and epic RPGs like *Oblivion*, *Genji* and *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*, there's a staggering wealth of next gen stunners from Day One. I don't even have room to cover the retina-blistering detail of Blu-ray HD movies, digital media managing or the endless array of features opened up by PS3's new online capabilities but trust me when I tell you there's a whole new world of entertainment waiting for you on 23 March.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor

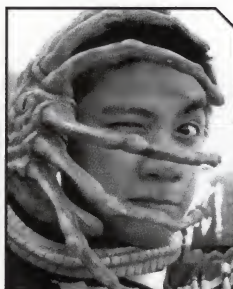
Narayan Pattison

OUR PS3 LAUNCH PARTY PLANS...



TRISTAN OGILVIE

I'm throwing the sickest party - I'm getting a keg, my friend's cousin's band is gonna play, there's gonna be plenty of ladies, plus I'm going to get a rope and hang an Xbox 360 from a tree branch, and get blindfolded Mexican children to beat the hell out of it with sticks. Viva Piñata, bitches!



PHILLIP JORGE

Hmm, maybe I'll throw some kind of black tie soiree, with plenty of Beluga caviar and Cristal by the crate. Invite some A-list socialites, maybe get busy with Lara Bingle. Either that or I'll stay home and eat ice cream cake until I throw up. I'm not fussed.



LUKE REILLY

Party? Oh, no you don't. I just got this damn house. If you think I'm going to be spending all weekend fishing out empty stubbies from behind the lounge and cleaning spew off my dog, forget it. Take your shoes off by the way. Actually, on second thought, don't come around here anymore.



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

Mate, it's all on at my joint: fairy bread, balloon animals, couple of clowns, a mini-tramp and enough horse tranquiliser to put Tasmania on the nod. Oh, and of course the PS3. I'm sprinkling the glitter on the invitations now. I'm inviting all my friends (I hope they both turn up).



DAVE KOZICKI

Forty cheerleaders all as hot as *Heroes*' Claire, a 1080p projector, a lazy-boy for each of the fellas, a case of Vodka, no missus', no phone calls, no sleeping, no passing out, just hitting *Resistance* multiplayer, shotguns or rocket launchers only, all night long... okay... maybe a little *MotorStorm*...



NICK O'SHEA

I reckon I'll go full throttle on the motorbike, and as I zoom past Tristos, WHAMMY, pop him square in the mouth. I'll follow that up by laughing heartily while he breaks a dozen bones as he piles headlong into a billboard. That's right, I'll be playing a hell of a lot of *MotorStorm*, fo' sho'.

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Shout outs :: Sony for hitting March with PS3 :: THQ and its wicked *Saints Row* scoop :: Beer

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NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

PS3 release date announced • Pursuit Force 2 • more GTA for PS2? • the future of Guitar Hero • the Pope calls you a pervert and more...

GOD OF WAR II - PS2



■ It takes two balls to earn a strike like *that*




■ "It's the glue factory for you!"



■ "Zeus sent you a message Kratos. You're fired! MWAHAHAHA!"

BLADE RUNNER

As you can see Kratos is still making use of those gnarly chain blades that are still ever-so-painfully latched to his forearms. As you can also see they're still completely and utterly righteous. Can you imagine one of these burning blades cleaving its way directly into your squishy skull? You probably shouldn't. It's gross.



PALE RIDER

Whoever this guy is, he doesn't look friendly. Plus, he's got glowing eyes – dead giveaway for an evil demon freak of some description. If you happen to be boning up on your Greek mythology anytime soon, look him up for us. While you're at it, look up his horse too. It's freakin' enormous. We're pretty sure it ate Phar Lap...

THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY!

Would you take a look at this bloke? Dude took out a god for crying out loud! When did it ever sound like a good idea to double-cross this cat? Kratos is looking better than ever with Sony Santa Monica pushing the PS2 to breaking point. Just check out the detail on his toga! (Burn, we totally made you look at a man in a dress).



PS3 PS2 PSP

GO FOR LAUNCH

PS3 launch date announced

Gamers across Australia and New Zealand can breathe a collective sigh of relief – the PlayStation 3 will be launched in PAL territories, including Europe, Australia and New Zealand, on March 23.

One million units are forecasted to ship during the launch period with sources indicating we should expect upwards of 40,000 of those to line store shelves in Australia.

In line with retail and consumer patterns and demand only the 60GB model will be available on launch, with the 20GB unit to follow later dependant on demand.

The price point has remained the same and will set you back \$999.95 for Aussies and \$1199.95 for kiwis.

The day one games line-up is very respectable one with almost 30 titles slated to be available from launch, plus a host of downloadable games available online. **LR**

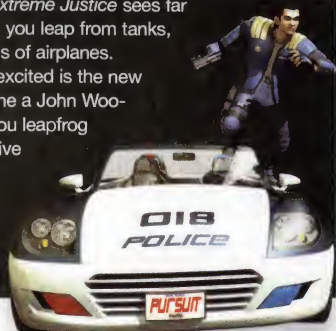
PS3 PS2 PSP

USE THE FORCE

Anyone who didn't catch 2006's *Pursuit Force* missed out on one of the year's most original and entertaining racers. Recognising the franchise's potential, Sony has greenlit a sequel, *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice*, due for release this year on both PSP and PS2.

Building on the 'jumping between high-speed vehicles' formula of the original, *Extreme Justice* sees far more epic chases where you leap from tanks, trains and even the wings of airplanes.

What's got us most excited is the new multiplayer mode. Imagine a John Woo-style flying gunfight as you leapfrog your opponent in explosive 200kmp/h car chases. It'll be like GTA-meets-Frogger-meets-Jessica Alba. What? She's crazy for PSP. **NP**



■ Guitar Hero...



■ ... Guitar Villian?

PS3 PS2 PSP

HEROES AND... VILLIANS?

Activision registers mysterious music game trademarks

It's been a big month for the *Guitar Hero* series, with news and rumours surrounding the future of the music genre's number one franchise flying faster than fingers on a fiery fretboard.

Firstly, publisher Activision has submitted trademark applications for both *Guitar Villian* and *Drum Villian*, igniting Internet fan forums with questions about whether or not they'll actually come to fruition (Red Octane registered trademarks for *Drum Hero*, *Keyboard Hero* and *Band Hero* last year, but nothing has come of them yet), and just exactly what

they'll entail (what is a 'Guitar Villian'? A guitarist who lives in an underground lair, or someone who just plain sucks?).

It's a strong possibility that all of these trademarks have been registered in strategic moves to pre-emptively block other developers from creating competing 'cash-in' titles, but here's hoping they refer to legitimate games in development (*Band Hero* – with cooperative guitars, drums and *SingStar*-esque vocals – simply makes too much sense to not exist).

Activision has also confirmed

that the development of future titles in the *Guitar Hero* series has moved to *Tony Hawk's* developer Neversoft, leaving original developer Harmonix to commence work on a new music game project, apparently "bigger and more ambitious" than *Guitar Hero*.

Neversoft is presumably currently hard at work on *Guitar Hero III*, but rumours persist that a *Guitar Hero: 1980s Edition* is also on the way for PS2 – despite the fact that many doctors warn such a game would "rock so hard your head would explode". Damn medical geeks. **TO**



■ "Offer refused" BLAM!

PS3 PS2 PSP

MORE FAVOURS ON THE PS3

Next gen *Godfather* offering too good to refuse?

The Godfather: The Don's Edition, a new plumped up version of *The Godfather* that debuted on the PS2 a while back, is headed to the PS3 this March. Featuring the Corleone Expansion Pack, it'll include a wealth of new gameplay improvements and content, including two new compounds of rival families to take out, more

character models, and two new transportation hubs to take over on your way to the top chair. Hardware wise the game is set to use the SIXAXIS motion-sensitivity so you can rough up zip-lipped thugs when they're in your grasp by tilting the controller around. Capiche? (We still don't know that that means). **JE**

PS3 PS2 PSP

SLIDE INTO SEGA RALLY

The inventor of the perennial 1995 arcade classic *Sega Rally Championship*, Sega is coming back at'cha with some next gen goodness. We are, of course, talking about *Sega Rally*, which is screeching its way to PS3 this year – and it ain't pulling any punches!

Sega is planning to deliver a truly unique and reactive racing experience with unprecedented attention to detail. It's focusing on over the top, adrenaline-charged racing, with a "back to basics" style approach to controls, and we can't wait to give it a go! The totally interactive environment engine, not dissimilar to that of *MotorStorm*, will have your car reacting to and leaving tracks in the different surfaces you're racing on, be it gravel, dirt or mud. With *MotorStorm* around the corner and *Colin McRae: DIRT* on the horizon it's looking like Sega is trying to get into a pissing contest to see who's got the prettiest racer around.

Now that's some competition we'll happily endorse! **DK**



■ Dirty and deformed – like sex with an amputee



PS3 PS2 PSP

FULFILL YOUR FANTASY

It's been a long time coming, but the much-anticipated and critically-acclaimed PS2 epic *Final Fantasy XII* is finally here. To celebrate the release we've got some great *Final Fantasy XII* prizes up for grabs thanks to Ubisoft. The grand prize winner will score a copy of Square-Enix's masterpiece, four collectable figurines and a plush Moogle, while seven runner-up winners will receive a copy of *Final Fantasy XII*. For a chance to win just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

QUESTION: Assuming the series last a few centuries, what would Final fantasy 148 be in Roman numerals?



■ "Oh, I am so getting her number" said GI Joe

INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Midway has announced *BlackSite: Area 51*, an action packed sequel to the surprisingly decent 2005 FPS *Area 51*. "*BlackSite: Area 51* gives players the opportunity to experience next generation, first-person shooter action in one of the world's most intriguing and mysterious environments," said Denise Fulton, studio head, Midway Studios.

911 IS A JOKE!

Now we've all poked fun at cops, ambos, and the fireys, but what if you could take control of them and rescue a city under a siege... of hilarity! Madness ensues as Codemasters brings you *Emergency Mayhem*, a tongue in cheek look at our protectors, where taking the piss is mandatory. With mental driving and arcade styled mini-games, saving a city ravaged by radioactive beavers and dodgy kebab stands may never be so much fun.

MORE JUST CAUSE?

All you fans of jumping off moving cars, propelling yourself to the heavens via parachute, and unleashing hell on any gun toting *Scarface* wannabe you get in your sights, will jump for joy as Eidos announces a sequel to *Just Cause*. The hits keep on coming, with both the *Tomb Raider* and *Hitman* franchises dishing up another serve as well as the highly anticipated *Kane and Lynch*. Looks like Eidos has plenty on the menu for 2007!

EA GOES CLUB CRAZY

In a bid to cater for the soccer obsessed, EA is gearing up for the release of *UEFA Champions League 2006-2007* on PS2 and PSP to go with the UEFA Tournament final this May. Expect *UEFA* to feature all the flash and polish of EA's *FIFA* titles as well as a new 'Virtual Card' trading system that allows gamers to trade team members, staff, strategies, and Gameplay boosters (which can be used mid-match) with ease.

ENCHANTED WE'RE SURE...

What would a new console be without a lengthy RPG to keep you behind closed doors for a couple of hundred hours or so? Man cannot live on FPS alone. Well Ubisoft has got you covered with the enchanting... err... *Enchanted Arms*. It's promising to deliver a deep immersive experience as your character, Atsuma, learns to control and unlock over 130 different creatures as he plays his part in an epic war over 1000 years in the making. Get ready to unlock and unleash the beasts!



PS3 PS2 PS

DREADLOCK HOLIDAY

Ponting prizes up for grabs!

WIN!

We can't offer you a free trip to the Caribbean to catch the World Cup of cricket, but we do have the next best thing. Thanks to Atari we've got 10 great cricket prize packs that'll knock you for six. The major prize includes a copy of *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007* plus a signed Kookaburra bat, signed cricket ball and a signed copy of Ricky's *Captain's Diary 2006*. The nine runner-up prizes contain a copy of *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007* and a signed cricket ball. For a shot at scoring one of these money-can't-buy prizes just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions below.

QUESTION: How many tests out of the five game Ashes 06-07 series did Australia win?



HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number and, most importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close March 27. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

A good friend of mine, for a reason I swore not to print, can't play games anymore. He just can't. What would you do if this were the case for you?

You could take up a sport, but which one? Skiing is too dependant on snow, golf is too hard and fencing is too gay. Women have even fewer options. We get netball which, by our age, is filled with women who have been playing it since they were four (in which case you end up running around the court in a lycra onesie shrieking, and when you get the ball you do something stupid).

You could find some other hobby, but most are social suicide. Butterfly collecting, for instance, sounds sweet but if you think the ladies are going to swoon when you show them your killing jar, you're wrong. They're going to vomit. Stamp collecting is probably okay if you're planning on becoming a serial murderer, but you should do so at your own risk.

You could learn to play an instrument, but again it's a decision fraught with problems. Unless you can afford a double bass or coax your girlfriend into draping herself seductively across your grand piano, there's only one cool instrument - and that's guitar. Unfortunately, everybody plays guitar and most of them probably do it better than you ever will. It's depressing, I know.

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

ENERGY REQUIRED TO BUY BIKE SHORTS:



ENERGY REQUIRED TO WEAR THEM:



MAN FUEL

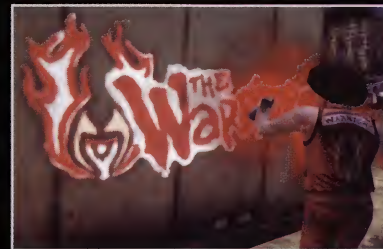
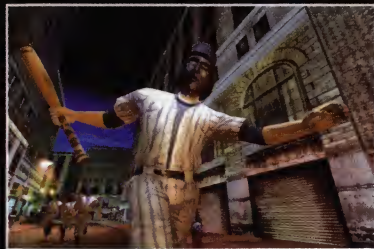


THE WARRIORS

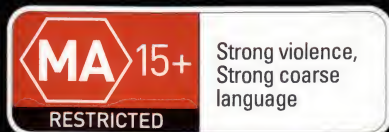
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- GAMESMASTER

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DVD GIVEAWAY

JACKASS OF ALL TRADES

Stunt-stuffed DVDs to giveaway!

To mark the release of *Jackass Number Two* we're dishing out five ultimate *Jackass* prize packs courtesy of Paramount. Each one contains *Jackass Number Two* on DVD, *Jackass The Movie* on DVD, *Jackass Volume One* and *Volume Two*, a *Jackass* cap, *Jackass* first-aid kit, *Jackass* wallet, *Jackass* tattoo, *Jackass* T-shirt and *Beavis and Butthead Season Two* on DVD. For a chance at scooping up one of these mammoth prize packs just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

QUESTION: Bam Margera is afraid of snakes. True or false?

WIN!

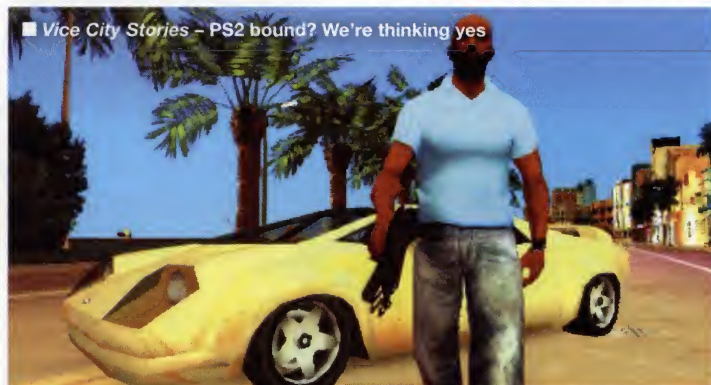


PS3 PS2 PSP

VICE CITY STORIES PS2 BOUND?

What's this? Rumours circulating online suggest that *Vice City Stories* is heading to PS2 – despite Rockstar's claim that it wasn't going to happen. The initial catalyst for all this innuendo came from websites flaunting a screenshot "apparently" taken from the ESRB website (the US equivalent of our OFLC) indicating the game was scheduled for both systems. However

after searching the site ourselves we had no luck, meaning either the screenshot was doctored or the listing was removed. Keeping things interesting however is the official US PlayStation website that has, at this time, a listing for the game under the PS2 section with a release date of TBA. When Rockstar was contacted it declined to comment on such speculation and rumours... **JE**



■ *Vice City Stories* – PS2 bound? We're thinking yes



PS3 PS2 PSP

RUNNING STUNTS

Master the art of urban acrobatics

We're guessing most of you saw the sweet Bond flick *Casino Royale* recently and soaked up the stompin' intro chase sequence through an African town and construction site. The bloke sprinting away from Bond was actually a master at *Free Running*, a left-of-centre sport concerned with leaping massive distances, skipping

up walls, and other genuinely cracker stuff. Well *Free Running* the game is scheduled to be touching down on PS2 and PSP in the next few months. Featuring enough insanity to make Tony Hawk look like Miss Daisy, it'll feature 40 different moves to master, a tonne of game modes, Adidas garb to dress your nutter in, and multiplayer options via Wi-Fi. **JE**

ENERGY REQUIRED TO DO YOGA CLASS:



ENERGY REQUIRED NOT TO LAUGH:



MAN FUEL

HAMMERTIME

Belt the stars you love to hate on PS3!



■ "Cop this, you faux-hawked wanker!"

PS3 PS2 PSP

MARCH OF HONOR

Do you have Nazi Hunting withdrawals? It happens to the best of us. But worry not, EA's mammoth WWII franchise will be storming our shores once again in March with *Medal of Honor Vanguard*, the newest game in the franchise for the PS2.

Sticking to the traditional one-character narrative as opposed to COD's multiple perspectives, gamers will buckle up the boots of Frank Keegan, a Corporal from the 82nd Airborne Division. As airborne lads get around (we're talking in the location sense of the term, not the naughty sense, although that's probably true, too) EA has recreated a stack of missions spread out across Europe, with each recreating historic battles such as Operation Husky in Sicily and Operation Varsity inside Germany itself.

The real question is will this be last the MOH game for the PS2, or will we eventually see *MOH Airborne* (coming for PS3) hit the system as well? Stay tuned for more intelligence... **JE**



GAME DESIGN 101

What is this thing called Hi-Def?

When any game developer is working on game graphics, there are three factors to consider: screen resolution, frame rate and graphical fidelity. Hi-Def games, strictly speaking, are those with a resolution of 1280x720 (720p) or 1920x1080 (1080i/1080p). When it comes to frame rates, 30fps (frames per second) is the minimum for smooth motion; 60fps is the gold standard. Graphical fidelity refers to the use of filters, lighting, particle effects and other development tricks to enhance the on-screen image.

Every game will require a different balance between these three factors. Fortunately, the PlayStation 3 has enough horsepower to give developers a free hand so they can make their decisions unhindered by a piece of hardware that won't support 1080p, for example, or that can't manage shaders and filters.

And even though having a Hi-Def display will allow you to see the PlayStation 3's eye-popping graphics in their full glory, they still look incredible on a regular (standard definition) TV. That's because the frame rate and graphical filters aren't dependent on resolution to work their magic, and because the PlayStation 3 can produce highly-detailed models that will look good no matter what you're viewing them on.

So go ahead and buy that BRAVIA you've had your eye on – you won't regret it. But don't be too worried if you're still using your five-year-old Trinitron set. Thanks to the PlayStation 3's graphical and computational muscle, your games will still look great.

PS3 PS2 PSP

PERVERTS?

Pope Benedict XVI has stuck the boot into the videogame industry in an address marking the church's World Communications Day.

"Any trend to produce programs and products – including animated films and videogames – which in the name of entertainment exalt violence and portray anti-social behaviour or the trivialisation of human sexuality is a perversion," said the pontiff.

In other words, if you're ever chilling with Benedict in your lounge room it's probably not a good idea to stick GTA on. Or any thing with zombies. Or Nazis. Or boobs.

In the meantime, you may want to throw out all your movies, games, comics books, Shakespeare, *Looney Tunes* cartoons, novels and Ninja Turtle action figures lest the pope call you a pervert. **LR**



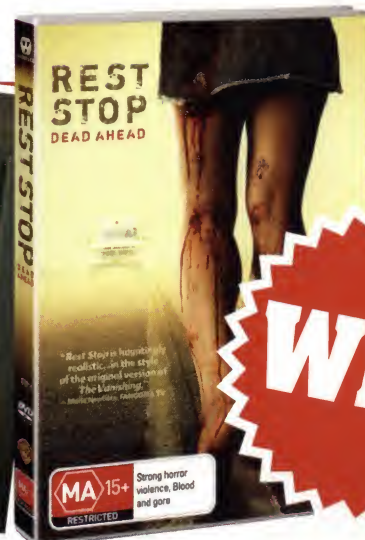
DVD GIVEAWAY

REST EASY

Rest Stop, the first film from Raw Feed, is a grisly horror movie from John Shibani, writer and executive producer of *The X-Files* and *Supernatural*. When two runaway lovers take a break at an abandoned rest stop they're menaced by a psychopath hell bent on tearing them apart – literally, piece by piece. Thanks to

Warner Bros. we've got 25 copies of this chilling thriller to give away, so for a chance to win just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

Question: The 'rest stop' is also a popular dance. True or false?



WIN!



PS3 PS2 PSP

WORST. MOVIE. EVER.

The wince-worthy game-to-movie adaptation *BloodRayne*, a film we couldn't actually review as no one could bring themselves to sit and watch the DVD, has picked up six nominations at the 27th annual Razzie awards. The Razzies, or Golden Raspberries, are the anti-Oscars and celebrate the worst Hollywood has to offer. *BloodRayne* received six nods including Worst Picture, Worst Actress, Worst Supporting Actor, Worst Supporting Actress, Worst Director and Worst Screenplay and will compete against the likes of *Little Man*, *Basic Instinct 2* and *Lady in the Water* for the major gong. **LR**

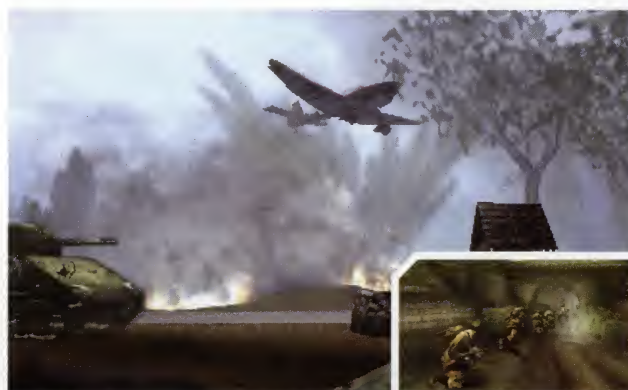
PS3 PS2 PSP

ARE YOU READY TO ANSWER THE CALL?

Call of Duty gets a PSP makeover

If you thought those dudes at Amaze Entertainment weren't showing the PSP any love, worry no more as *Call of Duty: Roads to Victory* is rolling into your neck of the woods. Eliminate the Nazi menace as you work your way through 13 key battles in your attempts to oust the Krauts and make the world a safer place.

Amaze is promising a unique *COD* experience, with spot-on controls tailored specifically for the PSP. *Roads to Victory* will also feature a 4-6 person multiplayer mode, including all the usual scenarios like Deathmatch and King of the Hill. With the success of its previous outings, expect *Call of Duty* to kick butt and rip your handheld a new one. **DK**



PS3 PS2 PSP

HAIL TO THE THEIF?

The mother of a nine-year-old criminal prodigy from Washington has claimed she believes PlayStation 2 taught her delinquent son how to drive. The four feet nine inches tall Semaj Booker jumped into a neighbour's car

and proceeded to get into a 150km/h chase with police, stopping only when the engine blew and he eventually mounted the curb and hit a tree. After being released he ran away again, bluffing his way onto a flight from Seattle to Phoenix. He managed to do

the same again but was caught trying to board a third flight.

It would be most interesting to discover exactly what game Ms Booker believes taught her son to drive, but all we really want to know is how can he even see over the dashboard? **LR**

THE TOP 10

Marketing slogans for the new look *OPS* magazine

1. "It's like the Internet, only slightly more flammable!"
2. "Now with 100% more percentages!"
3. "Everyone else is buying it – what's wrong with you? Are you some kind of terrorist or something?"
4. "If you can read this you owe us \$14.95".
5. "The magazine industry's answer to a monthly paper thingy full of stuff about games and stuff"
6. "Just in time for Christmas!" [We had to scratch that when our relaunch was delayed].
7. "Just in time for Easter!"
8. "Putting dead trees to good use!"
9. "May contain traces of nuts".
10. "Packed full of hot technology – it's the magazine Amish teenagers keep under their mattresses!"

WINNERS

From the comps in *OPS2* #62

Summer recovery DVD pack: T Van Neijenhoff, B Manasseh, T Gloster, E Davey, A Leong, N Vincent, J Reeves, L Nadir, R Roach, H Thorne www.reeltime.tv free movies for a year: J Feeney **All other winners** notified by phone or email

DVD GIVEAWAY

IDIOT BOX

Bad reception, ads, shifting timeslots – they're all things you don't have to worry about when you're watching your favourite TV show on DVD. Thanks to Paramount we've got 10 TV prize packs up for grabs. Each includes *Into the West* Season One, *Oz* Season One and *NCIS* Season Three. For a chance to win a set answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

QUESTION: What television station does *NCIS* currently air on?



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ENERGY REQUIRED TO CONTAIN YOUR EXCITEMENT:



MAN FUEL

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Quest Love (The Roots), Common,
Dan the Automator and many others.

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shooting touch, control and finesse than ever.

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THE GRUDGE 2

Unleashing on DVD March 7 comes the much-anticipated sequel to the 2004 worldwide hit *The Grudge*. The terrifying thriller *The Grudge 2* explores the dark secrets of the grudge as the terrifying supernatural curse is unleashed on a group of seemingly unrelated victims. One by

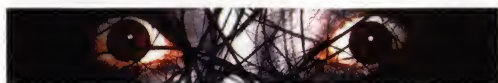
one, they are infected by the grudge, which quickly moves from a burned-down house in Tokyo and spreads to everyone who crosses its path.

The Grudge 2 stars Sarah Michelle Gellar, Amber Tamblyn and Teresa Palmer.



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Valid from March 7th - March 31st 2007.



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PRIZES

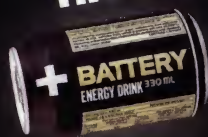
To celebrate the March 7 DVD release of *The Grudge 2*, you could score one of 20 copies of *The Grudge* and *The Grudge 2* on DVD valued at \$54.90 each. For a chance to win just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

Question: Sarah Michelle Gellar is the target of a supernatural nasty in *The Grudge 2*, but what was the name of her TV series where the supernatural nasties were targets of hers?



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ENTERTAINMENT

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+94%

+ BATTERY +
ENERGY DRINK 330 ML
Man FUEL

OUTSIDE THE BOX

SCHOOL OF HARD KNOX

OPS chats to *Jackass* star Johnny Knoxville and *Jackass* director Jeff Tremaine

OPS: Why is *Jackass* so popular?

JK: We're as confused as everybody else is, I don't know. It's always funny when you see someone get hit in the elbow or something and everyone's worried, but as soon as they get hit in the balls – man, everyone just cracks up.

OPS: What sort of legal issues do you come up against?

JT: Well, at first when we started the TV show we didn't know what the f–k we were doing...

JK: We still don't know what the f–k we're doing!

JT: I came from a skateboard magazine so we just used to punk everything. We didn't pay attention to release forms or permits... we really dealt with the cops all the time.

JK: Yeah, I had five carloads of cops pulling in on me, all at once, four or five or six times...

JT: So as we get better at what we do we minimise that

“ Sucking at everything really helps in my line of work. ”

as best we can. We still deal with the cops every now and then.

OPS: Does it get frustrating that there's always going to be people who don't get that it's not about shocking people, it's about making them laugh?

JK: If they don't get, they don't get it – it doesn't bother me.

JT: It does get frustrating. We heard about some event that kids were filming and they hurt somebody, I don't like that – that's missing the spirit of what we do. We're taking the shit out each other, but we're not really trying to hurt anyone who's not part of the group.

OPS: You put yourself on the line so much more in this one, did a big part of you want to get back on the horse?

JK: That was Pontius on the horse...



JT: [laughs] We were shooting the show *Wildboyz* and we were travelling around the world and [Johnny] would come with us. On the last trip we went on he was just going for it so hard that I had to say, "Dude, if you really want to kill yourself in front of the camera then lets do it on film, not for cable television."

OPS: How often does stuff go horribly wrong?

JK: Unless it goes horribly wrong you won't see it – if it goes horribly right you will never see it.

OPS: Do you enjoy pain?

JK: No, I hate it. It sucks.

OPS: What's the most common piece of advice you're given on set before a stunt?

JT: Bam gave you the best advice on how to ride a rocket.

JK: Yeah, yeah, "Just hold on like a motherf–ker!" That was the best advice because if I let go I was getting a big face full of fire. Which would have sucked.

OPS: How much stuff was cut from the film that we'll see on the DVD, and how come we don't see you in front of the camera much Jeff?

JK: When the camera is on you something f–ked is happening – it's not a compliment for the camera to be on you!

JT: Um, there's a tonne of stuff that didn't make the movie, the DVD will be a very rich experience for everyone. A lot of the time

we cut things down to just what's funny about it, but there's a whole bit around that. Like when we were in India putting the leech on Steve-o's eyeball, but really we put the leech on Loomis' hand first, then Dave England's testicle...

JK: His one testicle

JT: Yeah, he only has one. So things like that you'll see fuller versions of.

OPS: Are you worried for your daughter that something bad might happen to you one day?

JK: I know what's at stake. I wish Daddy could do something else, but he's not really good at even what I do – which kinda makes me good at it. Sucking at everything really helps in my line of work.

JT: Your lack of coordination is what makes it funny.

JK: We determined that the only two things I can do is 'stand in one spot' and 'hold onto this'. On a resume that's what it would say. Can't talk, can't sing, can't dance. Can't act – you've seen the movies.

OPS: How much did that riot control mine hurt?

JK: Just like I told 'em, it was loud and it hurt real bad...

JT: It made Bam cry.

JK: Twenty seconds later I was fine. Bam had a little tougher time than me. He's not a big stunt guy and I admire him for getting in there.

JT: He dove in wholeheartedly, everyone did. Wee Man and Preston did all these stunts – they never did stunts before. **LR**

OUT NOW!



Kmart

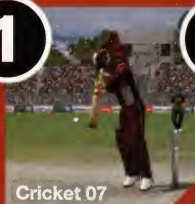
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TOP 10 GAMES CHART

1



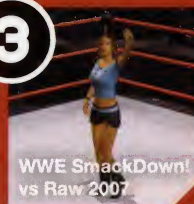
Cricket 07

2



Need for Speed Carbon

3



WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007

Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	Guitar Hero II (bundle)	Party	Activision
5	EyeToy Play 3 (bundle)	Party	Sony
6	Happy Feet	Adventure	Red Ant
7	LEGO Star Wars II	Adventure	Activision
8	BUZZ! Junior Jungle Party (bundle)	Party	Sony
9	Scarface: The World Is Yours	Adventure	Vivendi
10	Canis Canem Edit	Adventure	Rockstar

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Format	Title	Category	Distributor
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MARCH

PSP	Afterburner: Black Falcon	Flight	THQ
PS3	Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	Flight	Ubisoft
PSP	Call of Duty: Roads to Victory	FPS	Activision
PS3	Call of Duty 3	FPS	Activision
PS3	Def Jam: Icon	Fighting	EA
PS3	The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	RPG	Ubisoft
PS3	Enchanted Arms	RPG	Ubisoft
PS3	F.E.A.R.	FPS	Vivendi
PS3	Fight Night Round 3	Sports	EA
PS3	Formula 1 Championship Edition	Racing	Sony
PS3	Full Auto 2: Battlelines	Racing	THQ
PS3	Genji: Days of the Blade	Action	Sony
PS3	The Godfather: The Don's Edition	Action	EA
PS3	Gundam: Crossfire	Shooter	Atari
PS3	Marvel: Ultimate Alliance	Action RPG	Activision
PS3	MotorStorm	Racing	Sony
PS3	NBA 2K7	Sports	Take 2
PS3	NBA Street Homecourt	Sports	EA
PS3	Need for Speed Carbon	Racing	EA
PS3	NHL 2K7	Sports	Take 2
PS2/PSP	Pimp My Ride	Racing	Activision
PSP	Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	Adventure	Ubisoft
PS3	Resistance: Fall of Man	FPS	Sony
PS2	Ricky Ponting International Cricket 07	Sports	Atari
PS3	Ridge Racer 7	Racing	Sony
PS3	Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Stealth/Action	Ubisoft
PS2/PSP	Test Drive Unlimited	Racing	Atari
PS3	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	Sports	EA
PS2/PSP	TMNT	Beat 'em up	Ubisoft
PS3/PSP	Tony Hawk's Project 8	Skateboarding	Activision
PS3	Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	RPG	EA
PS3	Virtua Fighter 5	Fighting	THQ
PS3	Virtua Tennis 3	Sports	THQ
PS3	World Snooker Championship 2007	Sports	THQ

APRIL

PS2	God of War II	Adventure	Sony
PS2/PSP	Heatseeker	Flight	Atari
PSP	Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	Stealth/Action	Atari
PSP	Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	Platformer	Sony

MAY

PS2/PSP	Tomb Raider: 10th Anniversary	Adventure	Atari
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PS3 PS2 PSP

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

Okami is one of the most unique and visually striking games of the past few years and is a worthy addition to any gamer's library. Thanks to Activision we've got 10 copies of the kooky Japanese adventure and 10 *Okami* T-shirts to give away. For a chance to win just answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 14.

Question: The word Okami is Japanese for 'painting pooch'. True or false?



WIN!



BENZENE

AN INGREDIENT IN PAINT STRIPPER

AMMONIA

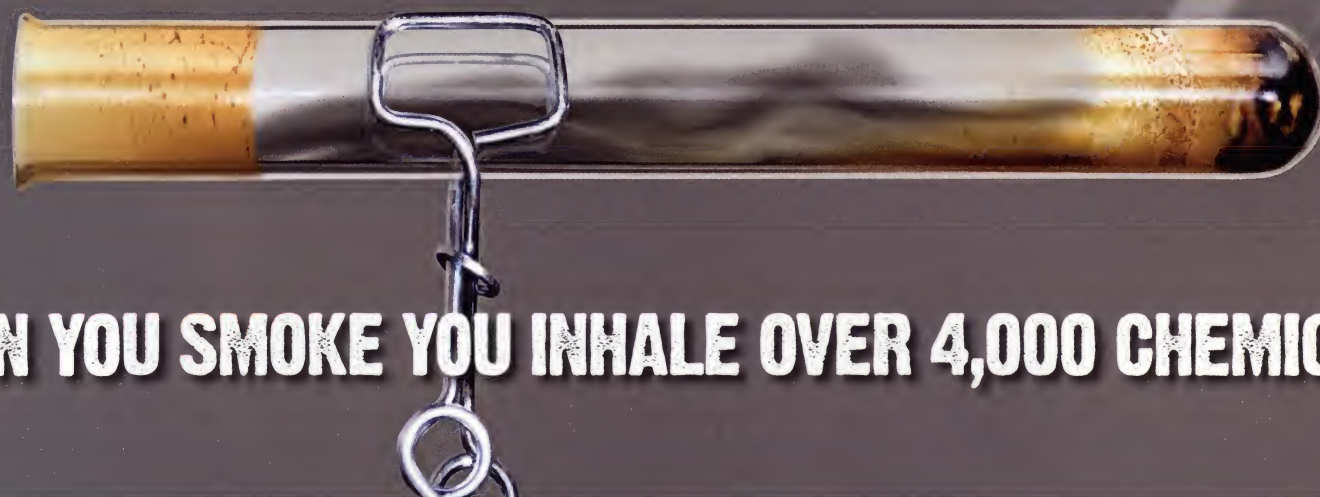
THE BLEACH FOUND IN TOILET CLEANER

HYDROGEN CYANIDE

USED IN RAT POISON

ACETONE

THE CHEMICAL IN NAIL POLISH REMOVER



WHEN YOU SMOKE YOU INHALE OVER 4,000 CHEMICALS

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NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Sony Computer Entertainment Australia's MD Michael Ephraim reveals his ambitious gameplan for the next generation of PlayStation.

OPS: What can you tell us about *Killzone*?

ME: I think it'll be one of the premier titles for PS3, thanks to its stunning ragdoll technology and the destruction of the environment. I think it will deliver one of the most realistic first-person shooter experiences ever.

OPS: Can you guarantee PS3 will be released in March in Australia?

ME: "Guarantee" is like saying 'this horse is going to win'. But I'm willing to take bets that it will be March. Everything we are doing is working towards a March launch. And I can guarantee that if Europe releases PS3 in March, Australia will also launch in March. *[He wasn't kidding – check the local PS3 launch details on page 12].*

OPS: How has your strategy changed from the sixth year of PS2 in 2006 to the first year of PS3 in 2007?

ME: With PS3 our target audience is the core gamers. PS3 is still primarily a videogaming device. Obviously our secondary markets have become more important than they were on PS2. Blu-ray is one. The benefit of Blu-ray is not just to play Blu-ray movies but to have games content on Blu-ray which is five times the size of DVD.

We're clearly targeting the core gamers in the early days. They've been our most loyal fans. But the expansion of PS3 offers a much bigger consumer base than PSone and PS2.

We intend to maximise those markets at the right time. When stock is available, when HD and Blu-ray become more standardised. We think PS3 can open up new homes that haven't bought PlayStations previously. We're currently sitting at 2.1 million owners of PS2 in Australia and we finished at 2.5 million on PSone.

For SCEA besides PS3 we have two healthy other formats. PS2 has now gone mass. We created the social gaming phenomenon. Wii has followed in our footsteps to be honest. We will go after that market very strongly, while still delivering core gamer titles like *God Of War II* – which will literally blow people away. As Phill Harrison said, "GOWII has pushed the PS2 to its maximum." He also said, "it will not just be the best game out on PS2 next year but it could be one of the top games for PS3 too." Meaning people who own a PS3 will enjoy playing GOWII on their PS3 – it's that good.

So we've got that market that we want to drive through 2007 and into 2008. We have no competition in that area (as far as the price point and broad demographic, family entertainment market goes). And PSP has a lot of legs with its 210,000 install base in Australia and 25 million shipped globally.

PS3 is a core gaming machine clearly but it is also a true standalone digital media device, not something that depends on having a PC connected. I think as people start understanding what the PS3 can do, it will truly start becoming the digital hub in the lounge room. Our competitors have tried to get there too but you have to jump through a lot of hoops because it's not a standalone digital device. We're very excited about PS3 because it could be anything.

OPS: How important is Blu-ray to PS3 and when do you see it replacing DVD?

ME: All indications are that Blu-ray is the format of choice among movie studios. Six of the seven studios are supporting Blu-ray, with only one of them supporting both HD-DVD and Blu-ray. The movie side is something we can only control so much of because of HD screen penetration and Blu-ray movie releases. Although I've been informed that by March there will be approximately 50 Blu-ray movies on the market.

But the main thing that the gamers need to think about is the Blu-ray disc capabilities for games. With 50GB there's the potential to create new genres and new experiences for gaming. The media is capable of storing the content for any kind of innovative thinking.

I think that is a really important point. To play Blu-ray movies is almost a secondary product of PS3, although it shouldn't be thought of if you look at the price of Blu-ray players. We firmly believe that with Blu-ray movies and HD, when more people see the difference they'll say, "we're very interested in this new level of entertainment."

Blu-ray technology has just started. It's also like PS3 in

many applications that are truly intuitive and plug and play that we would need to come back to this question in two years once we've built up the install base and see what applications are being used most by which people.

That's the key thing with PS3. At the heart it's a gaming machine but it is morphing. Ken Kutaragi said many times that the only reason we did PSone and PS2 was PS3. When we launched PSone he said that the vision was for PlayStation to become the hub of the lounge room. So this is not by accident. This has been planned. And in a digital space who knows what can happen in a few years. New devices come in and reshape how consumers interact with digital content and so on. I think that PS3 will be one of those devices that changes the landscape.

OPS: How long do you see the PS3 generation lasting?

ME: PS2 has been around since 2000. It's had seven years and it's not getting tired. It's just taken a different position in the market. It's not all about tech – it's about fun.

"I think as people start understanding what the PS3 can do, it will truly start becoming the digital hub in the lounge room."

that it can evolve. With firmware upgrades PS3 can evolve into almost anything. I think we've only touched the tip of the iceberg about what Blu-ray means to movies and games. I think in 2-3 years we'll look back and look at turning points in gaming and I don't think Blu-ray should be underestimated in how it will be looked at in terms of what it did for the industry.

OPS: What software, hardware or service will provide the most compelling reason to own PS3 in 2007?

ME: It's hard to answer that because there are a lot of things to consider. I think PlayStation Network will deliver the community and the interaction that gamers are looking for today. I think that depending on who you are those things are going to vary. Gaming and the PS3 Network will be the main thing, but if you look at the broader market there's the Blu-ray player, the digital media centre and more. With PS3 you can view and store all your digital music, videos and photos. Where our competitors only let you view but not store.

I think for a casual gamer who's looking for a digital device, maybe music and videos might be very important. We did a demo to senior management to all of the Sony sister companies and one of the managers was blown away that you could have six internet applications running at one time. You can watch MySpace and CNN and more at once. The resolution and the experience possible on PS3 is pretty amazing.

It's a tough question because I think the PS3 has so

I think PS3 can smash that very easily because the big difference is that PS3 is upgradeable by firmware. With PS2 what you got was what you got. There were some changes in production and so on, whereas with firmware, the additions to the machine will be true additions.

It's very hard to answer that question. I think 10 years is not unrealistic. With the Cell chip in there it sort of allows it to be at least 10 years and gives it that future proof shield. Because when you've got that chip in there that can run six, seven or eight applications at once, and that can process content and instructions so quickly, it's just not able to be fully utilised at the moment. We've yet to see what the Cell chip can really do. And the fact that it's in a device that can get firmware upgrades... the sky's the limit.

So I suppose that question can only be answered as we find out what sort of applications can be added to PS3. Because they could come out with a killer application that can be upgraded via firmware that could extend the lifespan another 2-3 years. I would think it will definitely exceed the PS2 lifespan. ♪



LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

KEEPING IT LOCAL



Dear OPS,

Will the new shooters on the PS3 have a LAN or link function? I feel that if Sony misses this the next time around it will shoot itself in the foot. The greatest shooters in history for me are the *TimeSplitters* games, but had they not had a link function they would not have had the same impact and Sony seems to omit this function from almost all its games whereas PC gamers have that luxury on just about all games. Now I know people are gonna say split-screen is better and who would be bothered setting it up? Well millions of PC guys do it all over the world – why can't we? I hope you can enlighten me and many others I know as I'm drooling at the thought of *Resistance: Fall of Man* being linkable.

Letman, via email

Well the bad news is that *Resistance* doesn't have an option for LAN play, nor do any of the PS3 launch titles except *Blazing Angels*. It's possible that such a feature could be added to a game via a downloadable update in the future, and the PS3 hardware supports it, but for now your only option for LAN play in a game like *Resistance* would be to run two or more PS3s into a router and then

into your Internet connection. Of course, then you're much more receptive to latency issues and potential drop outs depending on the quality of your net connection. We suppose that LAN support won't be a priority for developers until a year or so after launch, when there are enough PS3 consoles in the market that gatherings of PS3 owners becomes more of a likelihood. Until then, enjoy your free copy of *Resistance* – trust us, the split-screen and online modes both provide addictive multiplayer experiences.

WINNER!



Letter of the month wins a copy of *Resistance: Fall of Man* thanks to Sony!

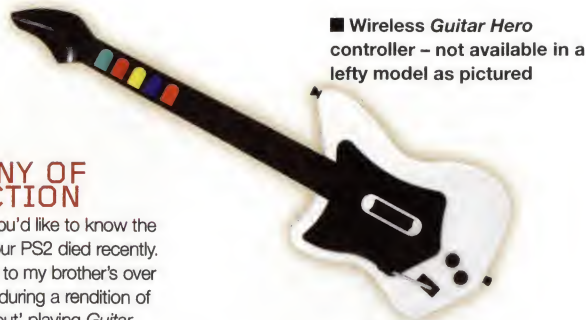
SYMPHONY OF DESTRUCTION

I thought maybe you'd like to know the grisly tale of how our PS2 died recently. The PS2 fell victim to my brother's over excited shredding during a rendition of 'Psychobilly Freakout' playing *Guitar Hero II*. Doing a rolling move on the floor, he pulled the PS2 out of the TV cabinet. Those SG guitar controllers really need longer cords! Our faithful three-year-old PS2 smashed front first into the floor. We managed to get our beloved *Guitar Hero II* disc out undamaged, but unfortunately the console was making weird noises and the disc tray had stopped functioning normally. It took a knife and a lot of force to open it. Then the tray wouldn't go back in... At least it's not long now until we can pick up a shiny new PS3.

Samantha Reed, via email

That's awful to hear, Samantha. We feared such a scenario when we first got the original *Guitar Hero*, so we

invested in a controller extension cable in an attempt to give us more room to rock out – but in the end our elaborate couch-diving and duck-walking just left us mummified by controller cable in a sarcophagus of rock. The good news is that Activision has come up with a means for untethered shredding – the wireless *Guitar Hero* controller, on sale now for \$79.95RRP. It will ensure your PS2 won't stage dive off your entertainment unit no matter how hard you rock out, so the only thing in your lounge room that will be in danger of shattering will be your pelvis (that's provided you play *Guitar Hero* like we play *Guitar Hero* – thrusting to every beat, baby).



■ Wireless *Guitar Hero* controller – not available in a lefty model as pictured



■ *Unreal Tournament 2007* – packs plenty of options for customisation



CREATE-A-GAME

In the *TimeSplitters* series you can make your own maps, but what if in future FPS games you could make other things? Because of the Blu-ray disc's size, the games could come with all the bits and pieces you would need to make your own characters and weapons, like clothes, barrels, scopes, etc. Or in *Gran Turismo*, what if you could buy/create your own teams? Buy a couple of cars, do them up, design your team's colours, hire some drivers, get some sponsors and enter them in races, all so you can make more money while you're busy upgrading your other 700 or so cars. Bigger is always better! Except if you're trying to lose weight. Bye!

Aydan Docwra, via email

Thanks to the PS3's hard drive and the support for a USB keyboard and mouse, you can bank on future games to reach new levels in user customisation. Developer Epic Games has already

promised to provide development tools with the PS3 version of *Unreal Tournament 2007*, allowing users to make their own maps, characters, weapons – you name it. Given that it can also support multiple operating systems, including developer favourite Linux, the PS3 should see all kinds of user created content, from games to applications – a factor that Sony Worldwide Studios head Phil Harrison sees as a central component of the PS3 platform. Late in 2006 Harrison was quoted as saying, "don't think about [user created content] in terms of [making] maps, think of it in terms of behaviours, environments, physics, rules... All the tools that you could want, but in a very consumer friendly way." So there you have it – other consoles let you swap tacky plastic faceplates, the PS3 allows you to modify and create your own games!



GOOD TIMES

What we've been up to this month – in pie form!

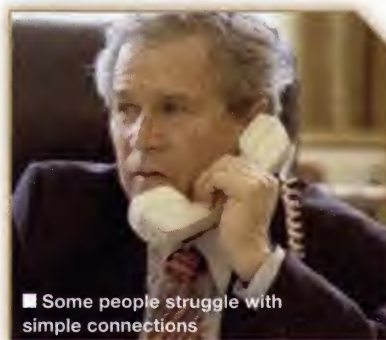
- Discussed naming the new mag 'Playboy 2'
- Studied Playboy mags for 'research purposes'
- Got scared at the thought of entering a dark alley
- Got scared at the thought of entering Kirstie Alley
- Held auditions for a new drummer

BAD CONNECTION

I thought I'd write in and raise some questions about the PS3 that may concern others. I have two questions to ask. Firstly, I would like to know if there is (or if there will be) an adapter for PS2 controllers and special controllers for the PS3? I would be devastated if, come March, I trade my PS2 in and then find out that I can no longer rock out to 'Free Bird' or 'War Pigs' in *Guitar Hero II*. Secondly, you guys know more than anyone that the majority of PS3 games offer an online service, with insanely insane 40 player deathmatches on *Resistance* to the fast-paced frantic *Unreal 2007*. All of these games are of amazing graphic and gameplay quality, so my question to you is do you need a high-speed broadband connection

to run these games smoothly or does the average (but still fast) 512k good enough? That's it for now, keep up the good work guys! (and girl)
Luke Borg, via email

Given that the Guitar Hero SG controller doesn't feature a PS3 'Home' button, which is essential for a controller to function with the PS3, it's not as simple as just creating a cable that changes the PS2 controller connector into a USB connector. Fortunately, third party peripheral maker Nyko has produced an adaptor that features a mysterious toggle switch that solves the problem, allowing PS2 SG controllers to run perfectly on your shiny new PS3. Sweet! As for your broadband connection, 512kbps is



■ Some people struggle with simple connections

certainly fast enough for online PS3 gaming – it just might be a little slower to download demos, videos and other goodies from the PlayStation Store in comparison with a speedier cable or ADSL2+ connection.

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

MORE VICE

Can you please tell me if *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories* is coming out on either the PS2 or the PS3 in the near future?

Sam Brownley, via email

There's been nothing official from Rockstar, but a PS2 version is a very strong possibility. On the other hand a PS3 version is out of the question, as is a mobile phone version, Atari Lynx version and a paperback 'Choose Your Own Adventure' version.

SMART SAVER

How do you save PS2 games if you're playing them on a PS3?

Matthew Amundsen, via email

The PS3 creates 'virtual memory cards' on its hard drive, allowing you to store infinitely more PS2 save games than an 8MB PS2 memory card ever could. Of course, if you want to transfer your old PS2 saves; you'll need a PS2 to PS3 memory card adaptor in order to copy them to the hard drive. The memories of your "first time"? Uh, keep them to yourself.

SWEET CHARITY

My PS2 has been stuffed since August 2005 and I have still bought every issue of [OPS2 magazine] since January 2005. So can I have your PS2 in March when you don't need it anymore because the PS3 will be out?

Keith Halliday, via email

The short answer is "no", the long answer is "nooooooooo" and the German answer is "nein". There are still plenty more PS2 games coming out in 2007 and beyond that we need to cover in the mag, so we're going to have to hang onto our PS2 consoles for a while yet.

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au



■ Denise Richards: um... she played a rocket scientist in a James Bond movie once, so this pic isn't that gratuitous

NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

I love the magazine, but there is just one thing I wanted to ask about it. Is there any reason in particular that the magazine changed the scoring system from the Graphics, Audio, Gameplay and Lifespan headings to the Pro's and Con's? I don't mind the current version as it is, as reading

the article can give you a general idea of what scores they would have got, but I preferred the system where each aspect got a definitive mark. Anyway, thanks again for producing a quality magazine, and I'm looking forward to the new version of it coming out, although it's kinda sad that a chapter is closing on OPS2.

Craig Speer, NSW

Does it really bother you what score the sound or graphics of a game gets if it gets a 9 or a 10 overall? We felt that the old scoring system was needlessly complicated, so we simplified it. Reviewing games isn't a science – we don't run tests on them in a lab or anything – so basically we use the body of the review to express if a game is any good or not, and the overall score is merely so that you can gauge it against other titles in the same genre. Still, we very much appreciate your input – and if any other readers out there want to voice their likes and dislikes about the new mag, then make with the writing! NOTE: We're more likely to read your letter if it's written on the back of one of those postcards with topless chicks at the beach on them. Just a heads up.



INSIDE GAMING

THIS MONTH TRISTAN TALKS TO A PS3 CONSOLE

Tristan: Hi and welcome to Australia! Gosh, you're way more beautiful in real life. Your skin is so glossy and free of blemishes – and those curves! Phwoar! I wanna leave fingerprints all over your body!

PS3: Watch it, buddy. I'm a male PS3.

Tristan: Oh... how exactly do you tell if a PS3 is male or not?

PS3: Easy – we're all males. Why else do you think it only requires the slightest touch to get us turned on? If you had a female PS3 you'd have to put on a Marvin Gaye CD and give it a back rub just to get it to accept a disc.

Tristan: Ain't that the honest truth. So tell me um... Wait, what do I call you? PS3? Mr PS3? Do you have a name?

PS3: Yep. It's Steve.

Tristan: Right, Steve. So tell me, Steve,

why should our readers break things off with their PS2s and start a relationship with you?

Steve: Oh come on, have you seen the PS2 lately? It's so thin these days! Girlfriend needs to eat something!

Tristan: Reecrr! Talk about catty. Well at least the PS2 only costs \$200.

Steve: Exactly – it's too skinny AND too cheap. It's like having Lindsay Lohan in your lounge room. Except a PS2 won't, y'know, steal your wallet or leave a stain on the rug.

Tristan: Ew. But what about all the great PS2 games coming out this year? *Final Fantasy XII*? *God of War II*?

Steve: "cough" I'm backwards compatible "cough" ... Sorry, I had something in my disc slot.

Tristan: Well, I guess you've got me there.

Damn, you really are a dreamboat!

Steve: Yep. HD visuals. Blu-ray movies, a free online service, motion-sensing controls – I've got it all.

Tristan: Everything but modesty, I suppose?

Steve: You've got me there. I certainly can't deny that I set new standards in the field of 'being totally awesome'.

Tristan: Agreed. Well, Steve – I can honestly say that it's been worth the wait to finally get my hands on you.

Naz [knocking on the games room door]: Uh, Tristan? Who is 'Steve' and why have you got your hands on him? And why is this door locked?

Tristan: ...

Steve: ...

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-12
■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** VOLITION
■ **WEB:** www.saintsrow.com



■ Toss grenades over your shoulder for luck. Wait, that's salt



■ "Attention, George Michael? We have the toilets surrounded! Come out with your pants up!"

SAINTS ROW

The Saints are coming... to PS3!

Imitation is the best form of flattery. If that's the case, then developer Volition is clearly a big fan of Rockstar's *GTA* series, as *Saints Row* audaciously commits grand theft of the majority of ideas and fundamental gameplay concepts behind the biggest franchise in the world of videogames.

But is that such a bad thing? Not in this case, given that *Saints Row* manages to beat Rockstar at its own game at least in the realm of controls, character customisation and online multiplayer, while also managing to throw in a few other well-crafted gameplay features of its own design that we could well see aped in the upcoming *GTA IV*.

Saints Row has already been a commercial and critical success on the Xbox 360, and now PS3 owners will be able to see just exactly what all the fuss has been about. Set in the sprawling fictional US city



■ What? Like you've never wanted to do a drive-by with a rocket launcher before?

of Stilwater, *Saints Row* sees you create your own protagonist and jump head-first into the deadly world of urban turf wars and organised crime. While you begin the game as a low-level stooge within the 3rd Street Saints gang, you'll eventually rise to become a major player (or 'playa', if you must) within the organization, toppling the three main rival crews in the form of the Los Carnales, Vice Kings and Westside Rollerz, and taking ownership of the city streets for good.



■ "Traffic report? Stick your traffic report! Channel 4 news 'copter is GOING DOWN!"



BOYZ 'N THE 'HOOD

Like *GTA*, *Saints Row* gives the player absolute freedom. You can walk, run, jump, swim and drive anywhere within the fully 3D playing environment, and multiple missions are available to you at any one time allowing you to tackle them in whichever order you choose. Each of the three rival gangs serve up their own mission paths, and you can also choose to pursue them one at a time or juggle conflicts with all three of them at once.

The city features a number of 'side

missions' littered throughout its streets, although describing them as such is misleading given that they're essentially compulsory if you wish to advance the main story of the game. In order to unlock each set of story missions you must first top up your 'Respect' meter, and the only way you can do this is to knock over a few side missions to earn the required respect points. On the one hand, this style of progression means that the storyline stalls slightly every few missions, disrupting the flow of the narrative somewhat, but on the other

hand it also encourages you to explore the city and everything the game has to offer, and fortunately *Saints Row*'s dozen or so of side mission types can be described as anything but laborious.

The *GTA* series typically offers the stock standard side mission types of taxi, vigilante, fire fighting and so on. All are extremely drawn out and repetitive, and you typically only plough through them in order to receive the relevant bonuses such as health boosts and the like. But the bulk of *Saints Row*'s side missions are actually enjoyable in their own right. For example,

ALL STATIONS TO HELL!

Here at *OPS* we're all patrons of Sydney's rail service, but when the 6:15pm from Bondi Junction is delayed for 20 minutes the most action we can take is to mutter under our breaths and stare miserably at our watches. But in *Saints Row* you can just grab a Molotov or RPG and blow the damn train right off its tracks! Nail a train on the tracks elevated over one of Stilwater's busier intersections and watch it violently snake its way down into traffic, crushing both cars and pedestrians under the bulk and momentum of its multiple carriages. That's what you get for hating the fares, CityRail! Er, we mean "generic train company" (our lawyer just choked on his breakfast bagel).



■ *Pimp My Ride* was soon cancelled after the 'put flames on the car' memo was horribly misinterpreted

GANG BANGING

We've wanted to see it in a *GTA* game since we first set foot in Liberty City, but Volition has well and truly beaten Rockstar to the punch by offering online support for up to 12 players in *Saints Row*. There are four game types: 'Gangster Brawl' which is your typical deathmatch, 'Big-Ass Chains' in which you must collect the bling from fallen enemies to sell for cash, 'Protect tha Pimp' which is a team-based 'attack and defend' style game and 'Blinged Out Ride' in which you have to upgrade your vehicle and then race to a rally point before your opponent. There are also some special co-op modes, and you can even create your own gang with your mates. Online drive-bys? You got it.



you might want to become a hitman on the side, fulfilling contracts by stalking a particular human target within the city and taking them out with a specific weapon.

Or if that sounds a bit too cold-blooded for you, why not take a step into the wacky world of insurance fraud? It can be as easy as lying down on the road in front of oncoming traffic in the suburbs, or as elaborate as swan diving off an overpass into a busy intersection in the downtown area. You can even drive your car head-on into a banked up row of motorists, and watch the bruised and beaten body of your character erupt out of the windscreen and cartwheel awkwardly over the violently compacting queue of vehicles below, while the respect points and dollars roll in.

There are also escort missions in which a celebrity has some fun with a



■ "I got a great parking spot for the van, honey – right in front of your apartment! There was an angry looking guy in a singlet nearby, but I'm sure it's fine..."

"...no *GTA* game world has ever looked this vibrant, detailed or alive..."

prostitute in the back seat of your car while you speed around town evading the paparazzi, drug trafficking where you act as a bodyguard for a dealer as they do business and plenty more completely immoral yet totally entertaining tasks.

PISTOL GRIP PUMP

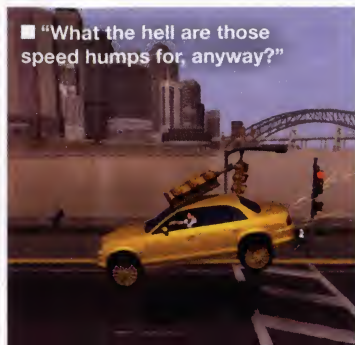
Another area where *Saints Row* trumps *GTA* is in regards to its targeting controls, both on foot and in-car. *Saints Row* doesn't feature any form of lock-on whatsoever, eliminating the frustration

inherent to such control systems where you often find yourself desperately cycling through the enemies on-screen to get to the most dangerous threat. Instead, *Saints Row*'s targeting is entirely manual, allowing you to free-aim with traditional FPS controls that have clearly been tweaked to perfection by the developers.

Whereas *GTA* has only ever allowed you to fire to either side during a drive-by (and straight ahead if you're on a motorbike), *Saints Row* allows you to

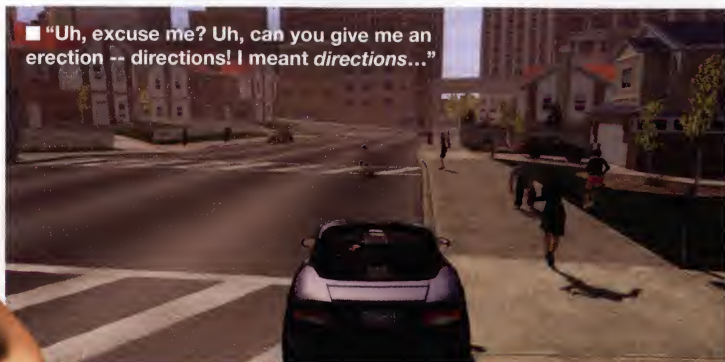


■ "What the hell are those speed humps for, anyway?"

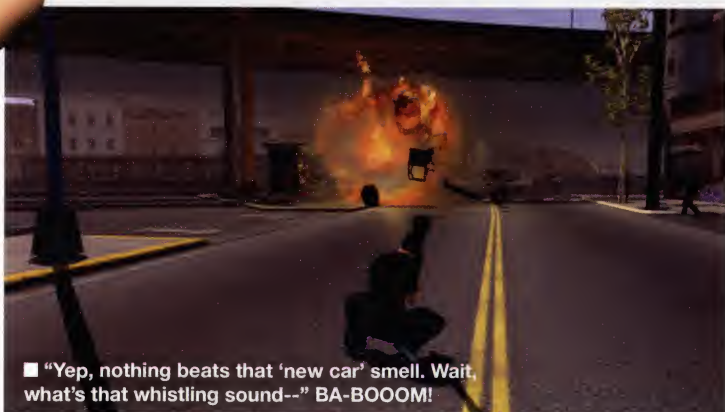




■ "We have located the Krispy Kreme. Initiating rappel rope..."



■ "Uh, excuse me? Uh, can you give me an erection -- directions! I meant *directions*..."



■ "Yep, nothing beats that 'new car' smell. Wait, what's that whistling sound--" BA-BOOOM!



■ "Why are you shooting the desk?"
"Cause I like to party"



use the right stick to aim the crosshair in any direction while still being able to steer your vehicle with the left – whether you're trying to shoot out the tires of the carload of homeboys on your tail or attempting to takedown the police chopper hovering overhead.

Speaking of taking down choppers – Volition has also managed to totally nail the rocket launchers in the game. Complimented by the use of the Havok physics engine, rockets have a devastating effect on their targets – tearing apart cars and helicopters at the seams in spectacular flashes of fire, heat haze and twisted metal.

MEAN STREETS

Indeed the visuals are overall quite brilliant – no GTA game world has ever looked this vibrant, detailed or alive, and the draw distance is virtually unlimited with none of that 'fade-in' that

occurred in GTA: *San Andreas*. Each area of the city exhibits its own unique look and feel thanks to the high quality texturing and environmental design, with the shadowy ghetto areas plagued by graffiti and boarded-up windows, and the upper-class suburbs all pristine, landscaped and bathed in sunshine. The animation of the characters is also a joy to behold, with hired gang members casually jumping over the door of your convertible and into the passenger seat, and cocking their pieces sideways during a drive-by – the muzzle flashes lighting up their cock-eyed expressions as their arms pump from the recoil. *Saints Row* is a seriously good-looking game.

But it's the little things that we appreciate most about the game. Like how the radio sounds different from car to car due to the different qualities of each sound system. Or the fact that

INFO BYTE

Saints Row features a slightly obscure yet totally rocking soundtrack, including a few big names like Iggy Pop, Jane's Addiction, Stereophonics, Eric B and Rakim, De La Soul and even Beethoven.



all of the cars in the city don't look like they just rolled off the assembly line – there are dirty cars and rusted cars and cars that would never pass registration. We also like how when you die or get arrested you retain all of your weapons, and how you're given the option of holding up a store owner at point blank, or breaking in after hours to get at the safe in the back. Neat little features such as these are in abundance in *Saints Row*.

If you love the GTA games, and chances are you do, then you probably already know how many sleeps there are between now and October 19th – the touted release date for *GTA IV*. But why torture yourself? *Saints Row* is out in May and it's got all your criminal cravings covered, coated in a next gen visual gloss and packing a genuinely compelling online mode. We'll know for certain if it's an essential purchase when we deliver our official verdict in a couple of months' time, but from what we've seen so far it's the closest you're going to get to a next gen GTA game for now without actually building a time machine or breaking into Rockstar's HQ. ♪ **Tristan Ogilvie**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "[*Saints Row*] represents an evolution of the open-world action genre, [and] also a gameplay-rich world [for] gamers."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It steals a lot from the GTA playbook, but it's also polished, well-designed and an immense amount of fun in its own right.

NEW FOR PS3?

THQ is at present tight-lipped about what extra features may be in store for the PS3 version of *Saints Row*, although we do know that it will come with all of the downloadable content from the Xbox 360 version preinstalled on the disc. We wouldn't rule out the possibility of the game supporting 1080p resolution for all you HD buffs, but we're more interested to see if Volition will incorporate aircraft into the game (aircraft you can pilot, that is). The developer claimed that it was not possible for the 360 version as not all 360 owners have hard drives (thanks to the ridiculous HDD-less 'Core' system), therefore it was impossible for the graphics engine to render the entire city from the air. Given that ALL PS3 consoles are shipped with hard drives, there shouldn't be an excuse for *Saints Row* PS3 to be without player-piloted helicopters, airplanes or even jetpacks. How about it, Volition?



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** AM3/SEGA
■ **WEB:** www.sega.com



VIRTUA TENNIS 3

A game set to match its predecessors?

It could be an awkward adolescence for Jaden Agassi. Given that he's the offspring of two of the greatest tennis players from the Open era – Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf – the pressure on him to be able to perform on the tennis court will be enormous. Sheesh – enjoy being four years old while you can, little man.

Similarly, huge expectations have been placed upon *Virtua Tennis 3* for the simple reason that *Virtua Tennis 2* is indisputably the greatest tennis videogame ever made. Fact. But aside from tweaking the visuals and presentation, how exactly do you improve upon perfection?

Answer? You don't, because there's no need. *Virtua Tennis 3* plays EXACTLY like *Virtua Tennis 2*. **X** performs a flat shot, **O** a slice, **Y** for topspin and **A** to lob. That's all you need to know. Like its predecessor the game still essentially

boils down to shot selection, timing and placement – exactly like the sport itself. Messing about with 'risk shots' and various other superfluous features like *VT*'s closest rival, the *Top Spin* series, only serves to complicate what should remain a pure, reflex-based experience. And *VT3* is just that.

LOOKING GOOD, MARIA

Only now not only does it play beautifully, but it looks amazing too. *VT2* on the PS2 may have been one of the eminently playable games on the last gen format, but it was hardly the prettiest. The game suffered from the overwhelming presence of 'jaggies', with the court lines themselves reduced to ragged zig-zags – they were seriously about as straight as Amelie Mauresmo.

Not so *VT3*. Step onto the shiny next gen court and you're greeted by silky smooth lines, flowing animations

and textures so real you'll want to reach out and touch them – and that's just on Sharapova's digital arse. The courts are superbly detailed with fully animated and vibrantly colourful crowds, and the player likenesses are some of the uncanniest ever featured in a sports title. The best part is that it all runs in the impeccably sharp 1080p resolution – you can almost make out the hickies on Lleyton Hewitt's neck (that Bec Cartwright is a real firecracker!).





■ Federer was embarrassed to find the court had worn the same shirt as him

The animation has also been ramped up significantly since the previous game, with players sprinting, sidestepping, leaping for overhead smashes and diving sideways Boris Becker-style to block passing shots. They'll also plant their hand on the ground to swivel when they're wrong footed, and celebrate winners with brash fist-pumping and hands held aloft. The slick levels of animation even extends to the clothing of the players, which swish around their bodies in relation to the motion of their shots, and balls slapped into the lip of the net will also result in a quivering shudder. It turns out balls slapped into the lip of Annette, our receptionist, will result in a shudder too – and a complaint to management [So worth it though. *Best office Christmas party ever! High five!* – Ed.].

VT3 crams in more licensed players than ever before, with 20 of the very best male and female athletes currently on tour fronting up for some virtual ball-thwacking (the men outweigh the ladies by 13 to 7). They're all immaculately realised too, from Federer's cyborg-like blank stare to Venus Williams' rigid pectoral muscles and Taylor Dent's general obscurity (wait, who is he again?). Other names rounding out the roster include Martina Hingis, David Nalbandian, Daniela Hantuchova and the terminally useless Tim Henman.

WORLDWIDE SMASH

The Arcade and Exhibition options return from VT2, but once again the real meat of the VT3 singleplayer experience lies within the World Tour mode. After initially creating either a male or female player, you begin your career ranked 300th in the world and you're given 20 years to get to the number one spot. The new World Tour mode features 10 brand new training games such as the groundstrokes game that sees you smack the ball at curling stones to slide them along the ice, or the new footwork training that has you scrambling to collect fruit while dodging boulder-sized tennis balls – like something straight out of a Japanese game show. Old favourites such as the Pin Crusher serving practice and the Bullseye volley exercise also make welcome returns.

Further to the novelty training mini-games is the Tennis Academy, which provides a number of tests that focus on skills that can't be learnt from knocking trophies off conveyor belts or sending tennis balls clattering into *Space Invaders*-style ball machines. At the academy you'll hone valuable techniques such as MAX serves and powerful running shots, which will hold you in good stead for the gradual climb up the tennis ranks.

When you're not training, you're either playing one of the many tournaments on

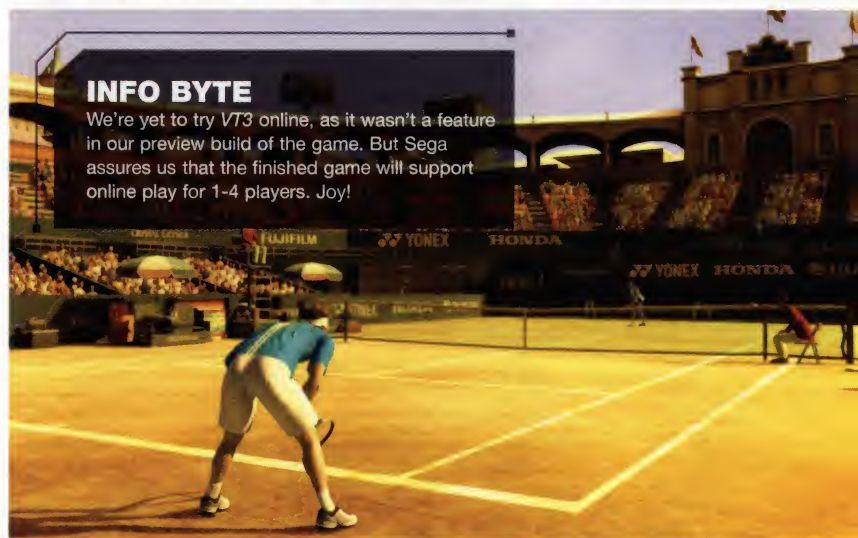


■ With a name like that he could only be a tennis player or a hitman

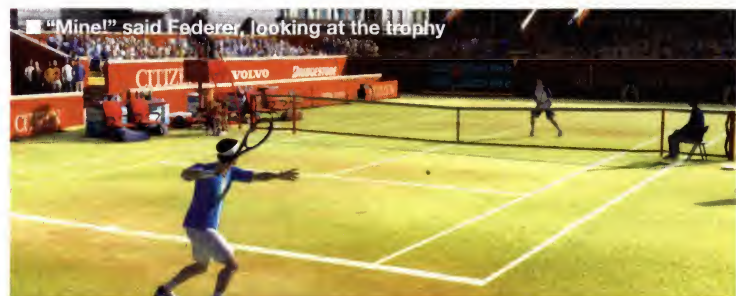
Juan Carlos Ferrero

INFO BYTE

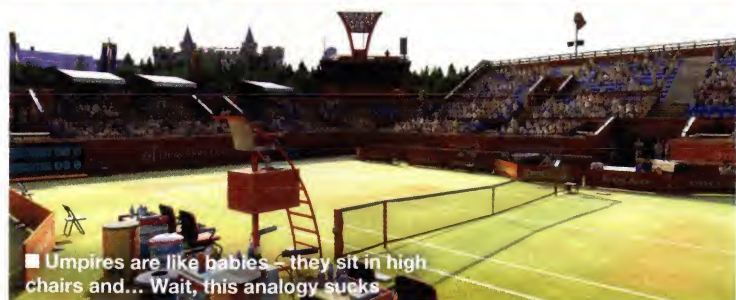
We're yet to try VT3 online, as it wasn't a feature in our preview build of the game. But Sega assures us that the finished game will support online play for 1-4 players. Joy!



“[VT3] essentially boils down to shot selection, timing and placement – exactly like the sport itself”



■ “Mine!” said Federer, looking at the trophy



■ Umpires are like babies – they sit in high chairs and... Wait, this analogy sucks

the tennis calendar, or resting in order to regain your player's stamina. In VT3, rest comes in three forms; energy drinks, spending a week at home and taking month-long vacations. At first it seems easiest to just guzzle down the energy drinks, as they return your stamina to 100% without sacrificing any time on the calendar, but the downside is that if your player exists on a diet of electrolytes with no actual rest, they're far more susceptible to injury. During our hands-on we put our player on a strict diet of Gatorade and 'winning', and we ended up snapping our femur bone cleanly in twain, forced to sit on the sidelines for 12 weeks while our skill points gradually rusted away. Ouch. And thus we leave VT3 for the time being with our virtual player in a virtual plaster cast. Expect the full hands-on review and official verdict next month. **Tristan Ogilvie**

WHAT THEY SAY:

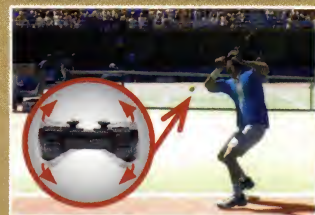
■ “[VT3 will] cement the franchises' position as the benchmark tennis videogame on any videogame format”.

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Classic VT gameplay now with online modes and glorious 1080p visuals. Should be THE must-have sports title at launch.

SIX-TWO, SIX-LOVE, SIXAXIS

If you want to come away from a session of VT3 with an authentic case of tennis elbow rather than just sore thumbs, you can select control method D which relies on the motion-sensing capabilities of the SIXAXIS to both steer your player around the court, and perform your shots. For example, you can pull the controller upwards to hit a lob, or thrust it downwards to put some backspin on the ball. Surprisingly it all works fairly effectively once you get used to it, but you do sacrifice the precision afforded by the humble analogue sticks and face buttons. Still, it's certainly a nice option to have.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** TACTICAL SHOOTER
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT/RED STORM
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com



■ Google Earth – also used by the US military



■ If these visuals were any sharper they'd cut your head off

GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

GRAW! Hngh! Good God, y'all! What is it good for?

Ubisoft has been on a bit of a roll lately with franchise after franchise continually hitting pay dirt, finally proving once and for all that the French are actually useful for something (we kid! We've been big fans of French fries and French kissing for years). But despite heavy competition from *Splinter Cell*, *Rainbow Six*, and the *Prince of Persia* series, the recently created GRAW franchise has arguably become the cream of what is becoming an increasingly creamy crop. This winning streak looks set to continue with *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* on the PS3, a game that screams 'next gen' until it's blue in the face.

IT'S THE WAR OF THE FUTURE... TODAY!

Set in 2011 in Mexico, just south of the US border, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* takes gamers through a variety of different locales, making retinas bleed profusely along the way. Environments include jungles, forests, mountains, and of course cities, with a super fashionable urban warfare setting. It all looks absolutely stunning, especially the broad city environments, which have taken a huge leap forward from the original.

Info on the actual storyline is a bit thin on the ground, but GRAW2's near future setting of 2011 gives the game some advantages

straight off the bat, helping to immediately distinguish the franchise from the slew of tactical shooters plaguing the market right now. The HUD is a perfect example of this. Acting almost like an expensive SatNav device, the HUD keeps complete track of the battlefield, marking enemies in red, and your teammates in green, along with a host of other targets. The HUD is a really stylish way of keeping track of all the in game action, and actually adds to the overall experience of the high tech war you are supposed to be involved in.

Weapons remain largely unaffected by GRAW2's jump into the near future, but vehicles sure as hell haven't, and this is best exemplified by the latest addition to the fleet, the 'mule'. Despite looking like a cross between a SUV and a half-assed Batmobile, the mule is actually an extremely cool addition to the *Ghost Recon* vehicle set.

Working almost like a mobile gun store (the NRA are going to love this bad boy) the mule is extremely useful, carrying an almost limitless amount of weaponry and ammo for you and your team, plus its extremely flexible. If the mission, for example, requires long range shooting, then you can easily take a sniper rifle from the mule. Likewise, if you find that close range action has rendered the weapon impotent, then you can swap it back for something more useful, such as an

assault rifle. But that's not all: the mule is also completely controllable and more importantly perfect for moving cover, providing your team with protection when it comes terrorist clobberin' time.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

It's pretty safe to say that the original GRAW was a pretty damn good game, but it still had its flaws, most of which, if not all, have been addressed in *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2*. From what we've seen so far the AI has received the largest overhaul; teammates, for example, are much more useful 'this time round. Instead of leading an 'elite' team of clumsy coafs who are about as stealthy as a fat kid in a china shop, your teammates are far more trustworthy, and

follow instructions accurately.

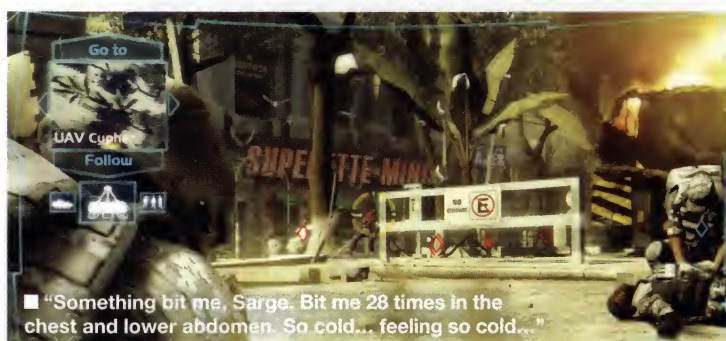
Enemy AI has also improved significantly, now your opponents are far more pro-active in all aspects of behaviour, becoming a little more human in their actions. Enemies will seek better cover, and come after you in a more realistic manner, attempting to pin you down, as opposed to simply standing there, waiting to absorb lead. The original GRAW was criticised for AI that seemed lacklustre when compared to the gorgeous next gen graphics on display; this time round the game is a much more complete package.

But even those gorgeous graphics have improved. In addition to improvements in motion blur, particle effects, and other graphical buzz words, all explosions in GRAW2 are completely based on the in-game



INFO BYTE

GRAW2 actually implements a dynamic weather system, with the wind, rain, and even sandstorms all affecting play, forcing players to adapt to different types of scenarios.



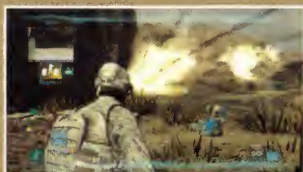
physics engine and the results are simply awesome (we dare you to try and retain bodily fluid after witnessing an explosive air strike, we dare you...).

Other cosmetic improvements aim to improve the overall atmosphere and vibe of the environments. Burnt by comments that the original *GRAW* seemed a little 'empty', Ubisoft has aimed to make each environment a living, breathing work of art by adding more civilians, and even animals to add to the overall vibrancy of the game setting. As opposed to the almost unfinished feel of its predecessor, this game seems like a more polished, complete product overall.

In short, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* is the game that the original should have been, and then some. Improvements have been made all round: the AI, the graphics, and the control system have all been given an overhaul and the overall effect reeks of greatness. Ubisoft has once again shown why it is quickly becoming one of the top third party publishers in the world. Nothing we have seen of this game so far looks set to sully that fine reputation. *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* is nothing short of *GRAW*some. **Mark Serrels**

TEAM TACTICS

Similar to many tactical shooters, players can actually select the individual members of their team; unlike most games in the genre, however, your choices will actually make a difference to the gameplay. The main addition to *GRAW2* is the medic class of soldier who can, as the name suggests, heal your team at any time. But while the medic is great at patching up your wounds and dabbing a lil' bit of Dettol to your bumps and bruises, he isn't as good a shot as the rest. *Ghost Recon* will force you to make choices that will genuinely affect your gaming experience.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We are going to push the soldier of the future experience even further with the release of *GRAW2*."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ With new vehicles, and improvements all round, Ubisoft looks set to bring another great franchise to PS3.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** POLYPHONY DIGITAL
■ **WEB:** www.polyphony.co.jp



■ Yellow cars – only bought by margarine salesmen or people who've lost bets

GRAN TURISMO HD CONCEPT

Can I get the Ferrari in cornflower blue?



■ We chipped in \$10 bucks and got the OPS logo stamped on the brake pads. Totally worth it...

Envy is always a sin – unless it's born from the Jones' having *Gran Turismo HD Concept* on their PS3's while you do not. Well tug our handbrakes and call us smarmy, because in this case the Jones' are us. Feeling that envy? You should. We've played the hubcaps off this baby and have stumbled into a strange emotional state – possibly love?

SO GT5 IS COMING OUT SOON?

To clarify, this isn't a demo of *Gran Turismo 5* per se, but the first of two teaser downloads to prevent starved rev heads from collapse until the full game's release sometime in 2008. Each demo will be based on content from *GT4* but running on early versions of the *GT5* engine. The current one we're dribbling over is about showing off the eye-smacking HD visuals while the next demo promises to flaunt *GT5*'s new driving engine – brhoom, brhoom.

But we're bloody happy with what we've seen so far. We've played this demo to bits already, and considering how far away the full game is from release, we're astounded with Polyphony's progress. It's been a bit of an alphabet gangle in terms of all the

I's and P's thrown around regarding this game and the HD support the PS3 offers in general, but it's worth mentioning just how much crisper the picture is with a HD compatible connection. Jagged polygons, ugly interlacing lining the tracks, wheels that are more like hexagonals – gone like a fart in the wind. Blurry backgrounds with grainy textures – they're about as present

comments. The cars, completely smooth yet finely detailed, look better than what any member of the OPS team drive home every afternoon.

BRHOOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

There's still plenty of stuff that looks a little last gen. Collateral around the track, like bystanders and buildings, still have

“...replaying the visuals from various angles yielded a number of Keanu-styled ‘whoa’ moments...”

as Britney Spears' virginity. Featured in the demo is the Eiger Nordwand course set against the tall snowy alps of Switzerland, and with the resolution cranked up, its brought a new level of realism to what's seen on screen. We kid you not, replaying the visuals from various angles yielded a number of Keanu-styled “whoa” moments followed by “that looks like real footage”

room to be pepped, as do some of the environmental textures. But we're talking about a young engine not due to mature for what could be another two years. Already a number of track spectators are running around possessing some sort of animation, and we can only presume this'll be taken to the next degree during development.

CARE TO PRESS ON MY CLUTCH

While only featuring one track the demo contains a Time Attack mode, ten cars to be unlocked (along with their tuned counterparts), a Drift Trial, and access to the fastest times recorded online from a global community of road eaters. Considering the usual freebies we're used to are sample boxes of cereal at the train station and sachets of shampoo in the mailbox, it's a pretty damn sweet deal. The Time Attack mode and Suzuki Cappuccino are the only things accessible to start with, but after taking to the track and beating down the lap time on-screen you can find another car waiting in your garage, glistening like an oiled up pair of chest sloggers. Each car has a different lap time that needs to be conquered in order to unlock the following car, but they're easier than demoralising a member of the Barry Army. In total, busting out all 10 cars should take decent drivers no less than 20 minutes.

That's not to suggest that handling each of them for the first time doesn't take some getting used to. The Toyota GT-Four Celica and Ferrari hoon through their revs and you've got to be careful you don't hammer into high a gear too late into a corner while going for

INFO BYTE

Sly old Polyphony President Yamauchi was voted 17th most powerful person in the automotive industry by *Motor Trend Magazine's* February 2005 and 2006 issue.

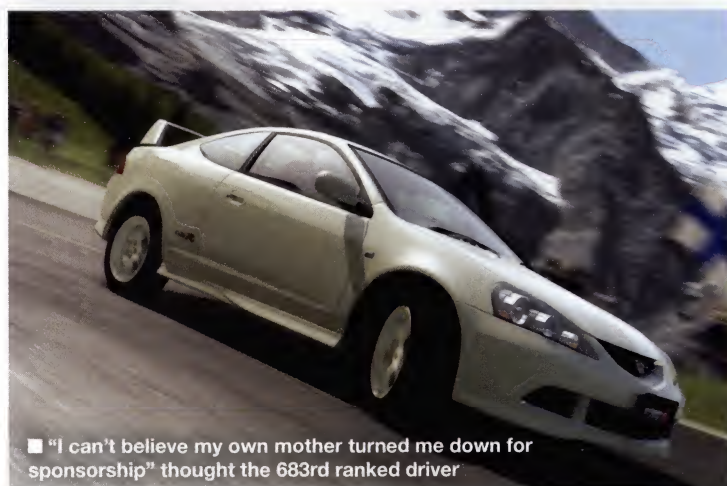




■ "Wait, do I turn into or out of the corner to pull out of a slide?" were the rookie's tragic last words



■ "Man I'm ripping along. Look how blurry everything is" "Err... Bobby, you forgot your glasses. You're doing 28km/h"



■ "I can't believe my own mother turned me down for sponsorship" thought the 683rd ranked driver

those record times. There are also options to change your tyres before each race, resulting in a number of potential racing configurations and styles that can change your lines around the track significantly. In any case, once you've unlocked all the cars you land access to a reversed version of the track and a Drift Trial. This takes its cue from *Ridge Racer* featuring a line of flags on screen that fill as you perform massive drifts around each corner. The more flags you fill, the more points you get.

It's early days, but the fact Polyphony is releasing these demos is a massive show of how seriously it's approaching *Gran Turismo* 5. The cars still can't be damaged, and it's not going to offer the cheap thrills of *Burnout* 5, but *GT5* is looking more and more like the ultimate road-test for wheel knockers everywhere. **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...the visual quality in *Gran Turismo HD* is 12 times higher than *Gran Turismo 4* on the PlayStation 2"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Saliva. Drooling. Must. Shut. Mouth. *Gran Turismo HD* is like looking up Yasmine Bleeth's skirt.

FUTURE ACCESSORY?

We all know that Logitech is the crème de la crème when it comes to racing wheels, but it out did itself with the G25. Built for PS2, this baby is made up of stainless steel with a leather grip, and like the Driving Force Pro, has 900 degrees of rotation! But it also has a clutch pedal and six-speed gated shifter – just like a real manual car! We're not sure if PS2 wheels will be compatible with *GT5* (though the Driving Force Pro works with this demo), but if they're not we're hoping Logitech pumps a PS3 version of this baby out, even if it does cost around \$500.



FIGHT AND FLIGHT... YOU ARE IN CONTROL.

Exclusive to PSP
March 2007

MACH
MODIFIED AIR COMBAT HEROES

PG Mild violence

PSP PlayStation Portable

Kuju **vivendi GAMES** **SIERRA**

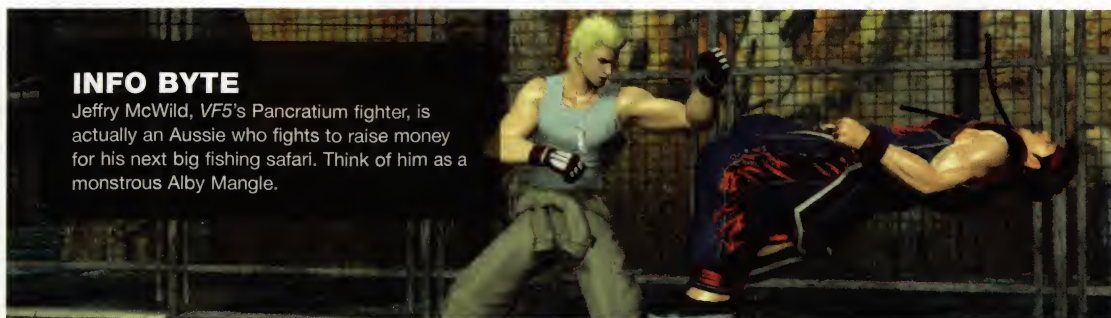
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FIGHTING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA
■ **WEB:** www.sega.com

INFO BYTE

Jeffrey McWild, VF5's Pancratium fighter, is actually an Aussie who fights to raise money for his next big fishing safari. Think of him as a monstrous Alby Mangle.



■ "ARRGH! You're standing on my toes!
Who taught you how to dance?"

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

This next gen fighter pulls no punches!

As the clock ticks down to the PS3 launch, Sega further evolves its fighting franchise for the PS3, *Virtua Fighter 5*. We were lucky enough to have the latest iteration of the fighting simulation series personally brought into our office by a local THQ representative, and we went the full twelve rounds with the champ.

ROUND ONE!

While early screenshots of VF5 were stunning, seeing it roar into life on the OPS office's 40" Sony Bravia in glorious 1080p at a silky smooth 60 frames per second was another thing entirely.

Every hair, every wrinkle, every rippling muscle is wrought with borderline photorealistic accuracy. Clothes are intricately detailed down to the stitch, with buckles, braces and elaborate shiny headgear reflecting the environment around them. Rather than raining off the characters in ridiculous rivulets, perspiration instead glistens on the fighters' skin, which suffice to say produces quite a striking effect on Vale

Tudo fighter Vanessa Lewis' sweat-laced décolletage. On a similar note, while there are plenty of fighting vixens in *Virtua Fighter 5*, Sega keeps to a sensible level of 'jiggle physics' rather than stooping to *Dead Or Alive*'s famous 'fistfuls of jelly at 6.0 on the Richter scale'. Realistic fighting and true-to-life Bristol mechanics? Is there anything Sega's AM2 division can't do?

Similarly, the levels on which the bouts of the World Fighting Tournament take place are similarly breathtaking. As the game progresses it features a range of different fighting arenas for combat to take place in, including lush rainforests, dusty canyon floors and even busy city streets. Each environment features a plethora of effects that create an incredibly convincing battleground for the *Virtua Fighter* combat. Surrounding foliage eddies gently in the breeze, fog occludes the morning sun and swirls around the combatants as they fight and heavy rain spatters off characters and forms deep puddles on the ground. Arena types vary between open platforms that can lead to the match ending prematurely with

a ring out, all the way to fully enclosed steel cages, where getting stuck between a wall and your opponent's flurry of blows can lead to a world of hurt.

IT'S ALL IN THE HIPS

Despite maintaining its classic three button control system, *Virtua Fighter 5* continues to manage a depth and balance that far outstrips other fighters that go for a more complicated setup. With some practise and coordination, entire combos can be buffered in with a few deft movements. Each character's arsenal of techniques is





■ Drunk boxers – always accusing their opponents of “staring at their girlfriends”



drawn from their martial art style, like Akira's relentless Hakkyoku-Ken elbow strikes and Aoi's numerous Aikijutsu counters.

Most of the game modes featured were fairly straightforward. After briefly firing up the quick thrills of Arcade mode, we soon moved into the head-to-head action of Versus mode, and egos became more bruised than their virtual counterparts. The extensive training regimen of Dojo mode helped suss out the new moves, but beyond the surface, there were still a couple of surprises to be discovered.

NO TOKENS REQUIRED

VF5's Quest mode takes an interesting approach to extending the lastability of the single player game by exploiting the infrastructure they created with their VF5 arcade units based on the Lindbergh hardware. For those that haven't stepped foot in an arcade for several years (and with the PS2 producing so many good titles, who can blame you?), the arcade version of *Virtua Fighter 5* employs a magnetic card system that saves your win/loss record, customised character options, fighting style and so on, just like a memory card does. The twist is that the VF5 arcade units also upload the data to Sega's servers for worldwide rankings – and for archival purposes.

Using this player data, Sega has recreated a virtual VF5 arcade circuit replete with countless virtual opponents for you to challenge. Dedicated fighters can battle their way around the world, starting at the arcades on the West Coast of the USA, all the way to the hallowed halls of the six story arcades in Akihabara district of Tokyo, Japan. Some top



players have even added their likeness to the game for added authenticity, and if you keep up with the Evolution world fighting game championships, chances are you'll recognise a few of them.

As you manage to best the competition in Quest mode, you earn in-game currency and unlock new costume parts and accessories to extensively customise your fighter's appearance.

NEVER SAY NEVER

Even though early reports specifically stated no online functionality, we were assured that there's a distinct possibility of some online aspects making their way into the final version of VF5. Whether this comes in the form of a fully fledged online versus mode, downloadable opponent data or shareable replays, these specific details remain to be seen.

If you're looking for some pugilistic payoff in your PS3, then you should look no further than *Virtua Fighter 5*. A couple of controllers and a mate on the couch for competition, and you've got a battle for the ages. **Nick O'Shea**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ “*Virtua Fighter 5* is the benchmark for next generation fighting games.”

WHAT WE SAY:

■ *Virtua Fighter 5* has set the bar high with its finely tuned gameplay and breathtaking visuals. Namco will have a tough time matching this masterwork.

THE TALE OF THE TAPE

Get to know your *Virtua Fighters*...



Akira Yuki

Style: Hakkyoku-Ken/Bajiquan
A disciple of the fighting arts, Akira trains rigorously and enters the tournament to attain true mastery of his style.



Jacky Bryant

Style: Jeet Kune Do
A world class racing driver who enters fighting tournaments purely for the adrenalin rush.



Shun Di

Style: Drunken Boxing
A grandmaster of Drunken Boxing and of drinking, Shun has always loved a good bout.



Lion Rafale

Style: Mantis-style Kung-Fu
The son of a billionaire entrepreneur, Lion fights to show his father that he can make it in the world by his own strength and fighting prowess.



■ Scattering flower petals on the floor – romantic yes, but inappropriate in this instance

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA
■ **WEB:** www.easports.com



■ "Yo, homeboy. Your skills be fresh, G money!" shouted a white person, before being savagely beaten

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

"He's on fffffire....!"

Boomshakalaka! All the punters who've been whining, "where's the new *NBA Jam*?" for the last decade should brace themselves for the following bit of mag canon by wedging a knuckle directly into their cake hole. Are you ready?

NBA Street Homecourt makes *NBA Jam* its bitch! No, it's not made by the old fogies who built that original arcade religion, and no it's not a continuation of the original franchise, but the shizzle is that after playing EA's preview build of *NBA Street Homecourt* for quite a while we can proclaim it fills the *NBA Jam* void in your heart – and then some.

To think of this as basketball would be like calling *Wrestlemania* an Olympic event. This is hip-hop b-ball breakdancing its way into the next generation of gaming oak, packed with gameplay borne from tripped out street fantasy rather than centre court plays. Here centres can leap twice the height of the ring to block shots, guards can spin and twirl on the concrete while wielding the ball around like it's on

a string, and forwards leap for alley oops like they're trampoline-propelled team mascots during the half-time entertainment.

Sound complex? It's not. In fact this game has been made to play out as simply as possible so you and a few mates can gather around the tube and punch out a game packed with "whoas" and "phwoas" despite knowing nothing about basketball.

Apart from your shoot, pass, and turbo buttons, the **X** and **A** buttons also serve to turn your ball handler into an on-court Mandrake that would make the Harlem globetrotters look positively English. Successfully perform enough tricks on your way to bagging a bucket, and you'll boost up your trick meter. When that maxes out you can instigate a whacked-up 'Gamebreaker' that causes your trick moves to go from cool to nuttastic and can yield you up to three extra points if you successfully score off that play.

There's nothing else to it – but that's the beauty of it – well that and

the fact the game looks worthy of seduction running at 1080p on a top-rate screen. While we dabbled, dribbled, and monster dunked our way over the courts with licensed NBA superstars from Kobe Bryant to Dwyane Wade, the productivity of those in the office around us declined like disco.

It's looking sharp, people, it's looking very sharp indeed. In this gaming world engrossed with flat film-to-game cash ins and over simulation, *NBA Street Homecourt* looks like it will deliver that one thing many sour-dough games these days seem to lack – fun, and a helluva lot of it. **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...the *NBA Street* franchise is once again raising the bar with cutting edge visuals and innovative gameplay..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ *NBA Street Homecourt* is shaping up to be a trash-talking, rim-shaking, block-rocking dunk-a-thon. Bring it on!



■ "Wait... I think I just got a puncture in my Pumps..."

DOUBLE DUNKING

Those cheeky ball-fiddlin' monkeys! NBA stars or not, we've always been of the view they were more human than human. Our suspicions were confirmed when we were playing the CPU and they started pulling out double dunks – a slam dunk that sees them smash the ball through the hoop, regather it through some basketobatics, and then slam it through again unimpeded for double the points. Fortunately us mere mortals can do the same thing by carefully watching the bar that starts charging up above our man when they go for a slam. Release it just before it blows out and you'll nail the glorious double dunk. Ooh la la.



INFO BYTE

Apart from NBA players, the game features six stars from the WNBA (that's the US basketball league for 'da ladies') including Australia's own Lauren Jackson. You go, girl!



■ "Travel! That's a travel, right there!"

■ "Travel"? Fool, you'll be 'travelling' to the emergency ward with a ball up your ass in a second..."



■ One of the more conservative dunks in the game...



■ When white guys try to dunk...

Jackie Chan is a warrior across time
in this action packed fantasy!



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MADMAN
ENTERTAINMENT

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FLIGHT SIM
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** IR GURUS
■ **WEB:** www.irgurus.com



■ "Whoa, that was close! I only just managed to dodge that one, Jack. Jack...?"



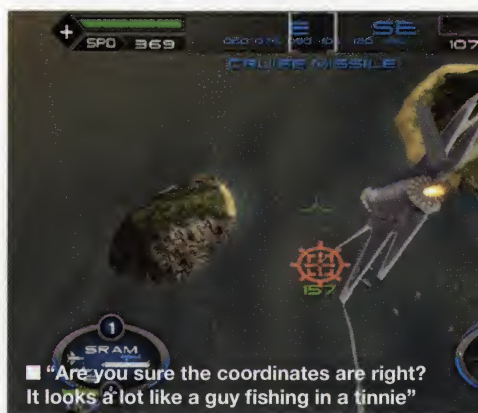
■ "So that's what the red button does... Ah well, I never liked that country anyway"



■ "Take that you stupid MiG! In your face Ruskies!"
"Dammit Johnson! That's your third passenger jet this week!"



■ "I've got a bogey in my nose and a hand on my skyrocket... Wait, that's not it"



■ "Are you sure the coordinates are right? It looks a lot like a guy fishing in a tinnie"

HEATSEEKER

You can be my wingman any time...

Traditionally the domain of rotund men with bad facial hair, flight games, outside of the *Ace Combat* series, haven't exactly been popular as of late, but IR Gurus' new title, *Heatseeker*, looks set to change all that, with a simpler approach to what has previously been viewed as an inaccessible genre. The phrase that was repeated time and time again during our visit to IR Gurus' HQ was "*Burnout* with planes", the "*Burnout* of the sky". With *Heatseeker*, IR Gurus seems set to bring

fun back into flights sims.

First off, IR Gurus loves *Top Gun*, its plain to see; and this fact was confirmed when *Heatseeker*'s Head of Development, Ben Palmer confessed that the movie was actually his "favourite of all time". That homoerotic combination of planes, jet fuel and man-love had so much appeal that the entire team have attempted to forge *Heatseeker* in its image: an arcade/flight sim that takes all the basic elements of the genre and pushes it

firmly to the max. All we can say is, welcome to the danger zone people... Welcome to the danger zone...

But how has IR Gurus attempted to make flight games 'fun'? Well, the most touted aspect of *Heatseeker* is the 'impact cam', a feature that attempts to take you right into the thick of the action, via close up angles, and slo-mo camera shots of the cool explosions that occur throughout the game. Think *Burnout*'s crash cam, or even the way in which the *WWE SmackDown! Vs Raw* titles interrupt play with a cool series of camera angles every time a special move is performed. The idea is that gamers can see what is happening, all of the time.

Basically, IR Gurus wants to remove players from the lacklustre "blip shooting" seen in previous flight games. As Palmer says, "traditionally fighter jet combat games take place over tens of thousands of kilometres, we didn't

want that because its not arcade, its not fun, its not videogaming. We wanted to bring it up close and personal: you can actually see stuff happening". As a game mechanic it works brilliantly, implemented to the extent that the impact cam never detaches you from the gameplay itself. If anything, it make *Heatseeker* more immersive.

With over 30 different fighter jets available, players are spoiled for choice. Ranging from classic planes such as the F-15 to more modern jets, each plane is kept completely unique by the use of up to 38 different parameters affecting variables such as weighting, drag, and engine thrust. Basically, no two planes are alike, and every single one handles in an individual manner.

Then we come to the weapons, an aspect of the game that IR Gurus is particularly proud of. *Heatseeker* has the basics, such as rockets, which were referred to as "the shotguns of the

■ "Sure, some people say our treatment of illegal fishermen is harsh... Actually, everyone says that..."





■ "Was that a wing that just flew past the window?"
"I think so... Yep, this is not good..."



■ There really is nothing quite like the sight of a freshly shawn undercarriage



■ "Requesting flyby of Boobie Island?"
"Negative Ghost Rider, the bra is full"



■ "Aarrgghh! I'm on fire! Help me Tom Cruise"



"If Jerry Bruckheimer were to produce a game he would probably make *Heatseeker*, a game heavy on thrills, explosions and... fun."

sky", but has also managed to squeeze in some more interesting weaponry. The EMP especially caught our eye; fire this bad boy at a ship and an electromagnetic pulse will take out every single turret or electrically operated weapon system, leaving the ship as a literal sitting duck for you to swoop in and destroy mercilessly.

Missile evasion is another area where *Heatseeker* looks set to redefine the flight genre. Instead of simply bricking your pants and just randomly jerking the controller around when an enemy missile is on your tail, IR Gurus has set in place a game mechanic that attempts to bring consistency and fairness to missile evasion. Once a missile is fired at your jet, the game will direct you, for example instructing you to break left, or break right. If you don't, or your timing is shaky, you will ultimately go the way of Goose (RIP) and be blown tragically

out of the sky.

Overall we were extremely impressed with the direction *Heatseeker* has taken. Franchises like *Tony Hawk* and *Burnout* have been very successful in replacing cold hard reality with fun game dynamics, and this game looks set to follow in that tradition. If Jerry Bruckheimer were to produce a game he would probably make *Heatseeker*, a game heavy on thrills, speed, explosions and, most of all, fun. **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "It's *Burnout* with planes; the *Burnout* of the sky. I prefer using the term 'action movie', it fits that sort of aesthetic."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Puts the 'light' in flight, this game is completely accessible and, most importantly, fun. Looks set to revitalise the genre.

TAKE MY BREATH AWAY

Sick of flight games that make you feel like you are moving as fast as your Grandad uphill in his Zimmer? Well *Heatseeker* has some tricks up its sleeve that will take your breath away (enough with the *Top Gun* puns already – Ed). *Heatseeker* is all about creating the illusion of high speed, with camera shakes, and speed lines enhancing the top speed experience ala *Burnout*. Complaining that "most flight games appear really slow once you get above the ground environment", developer Ben Palmer made it his personal mission to replicate a feeling of intense speed in *Heatseeker*, and in our humble opinion has succeeded brilliantly.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1 (2-8 ONLINE)
■ **RELEASE:** FEBRUARY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** MELBOURNE HOUSE
■ **WEB:** www.testdriveunlimited.com



■ Nice trunk. We wanna put our bike in it



■ "Oh thanks, buddy. I just spilt my latté on my leather interior. Jerk!"



■ Red lights = bad. Red light districts = good!



■ Driver side roll bar. If you're in the passenger seat? You'd better be short

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

The boy racer's wet dream...



Remember when you first passed your driving test and all you wanted to do was drive? You probably borrowed your dad's car, grabbed a bunch of your spotty mates and drove to... well... nowhere really. You just drove for the hell of it; to the shops, to the cinema, to the local car park – you found excuses to drive because it just felt so cool to be behind the wheel. Anyone who ever drove a car for the first time remembers that feeling; the feeling of freedom that comes with knowing you can drive wherever the hell you want, whenever you want. That's

the kind of feeling Atari wants you to relive with *Test Drive Unlimited* for the PS2 and PSP.

Although this concept sounds simple, the game is actually a pretty ambitious project, and to generalise and paint *Test Drive Unlimited* as a simple racing game would be a complete disservice to what is being attempted here. Taking you out of the corny inducing lap environment that permeates the racing genre, *Test Drive Unlimited* attempts to do so much more, dropping you slap bang in the middle of an island with only two instructions: drive and

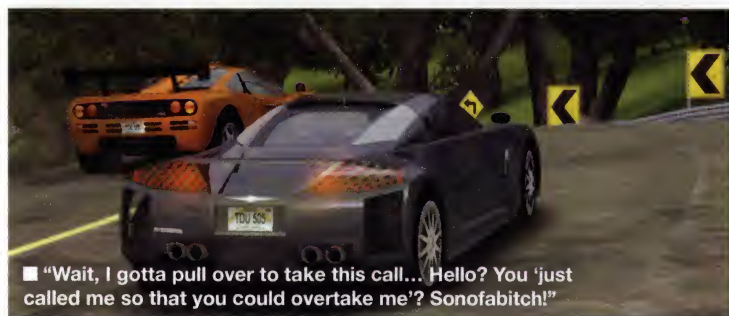




■ Um, our money's on the jet



■ "What the? That blue car didn't even indicate?! Oh, I am this close to honking the horn. Just give me a reason, pal."



■ "Wait, I gotta pull over to take this call... Hello? You 'just called me so that you could overtake me'? Sonofabitch!"

do whatever the hell you feel like.

Set on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, the *Test Drive Unlimited* gaming area is pretty spectacular. For those who don't know, Oahu is actually a real island, and almost every area in *Test Drive* has been rendered and mapped accurately using satellite imagery. With over 1000km of track to explore and a massive gaming area, *Test Drive Unlimited* cannot really be compared to any game. In many ways it actually has more in common with, say, *World of Warcraft* than *Gran Turismo*.

Well, not really. It would be fairer to say

that it combines many elements of both these games. Online, for example, is a large focus in *Test Drive Unlimited*. Lead developer Kevin Burfitt told us, "It's the simplest thing, as soon as you are logged online, you are playing with other players, simple as that. You can drive around with other players and you can challenge them to races." These races can either be on one of the 240 circuits already designed by developer Melbourne House, or, if you're feeling creative, you can plot your own race-course using the game map.

The options for these races are

numerous, almost endless, but perhaps best of all, you don't even have to race at all. Those who want to relive their days as a horny, greased up teenage boy racer can feel free to drive around with their online mates randomly, just looking for cool spots, or having their own impromptu races. The gaming area is actually big enough to sustain that sort of nonsense. Those looking for a quick online race can simply head to the drive in, which has been described as a "focal point for online play". Once in this area you can search for any race that you, at that immediate moment, can join.

That's not to say, however, that *Test Drive Unlimited* is only designed for online play. On the contrary, Melbourne House has been determined that the PS2's offline options are just as substantial as the online play. The amount of offline races is huge, over 240 to be exact, with one of those races clocking in at a ridiculous 100km. Add to this the huge amounts of unlockable cars, time challenges, quick race and rival club modes – even if you never stick a modem into your PS2 you will still get you money's worth and a lot more besides.

Test Drive Unlimited is a pretty huge technical achievement, and a very cool game to boot. Adding a sense of freedom to what is usually a restricted genre is an ingenious idea, releasing gamers from the lap strait jacket they have become accustomed to. The result is a free flowing natural driving experience that goes beyond what we usually expect from driving games. Petrolheads of the world rejoice, this is the game you have been waiting for. **— Mark Serrels**

INFO BYTE

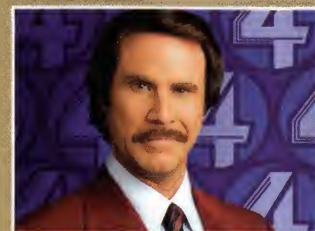
Test Drive Unlimited keeps track of your records every time you complete a race online. You can find out if you are 1st, 71st or 301st on any specific race compared with everyone else in the world. Nice.



■ Luke actually spent his honeymoon in Hawaii. The fool! We didn't even have to leave the country to get 'laid' on our wedding night...

SIZE MATTERS...

Much like Ron Burgundy in *Anchorman*, Kevin Burfitt, head of development for *Test Drive Unlimited*, is a pretty big deal. He had this to say about his new baby: "the basic concept of the game is that you have this whole island; it's about a 20km squared gaming area and every metre of that island is mapped with very accurate information, the topology of the map is very accurate. We have a 1000 miles of road, with over 240 races, and the largest race that encompasses the whole island is over 100 kilometres". Oh my.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The online is not critical to the game. We were very careful to make sure the game would stand alone without the online."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ There is seriously so much to do in this game. A huge amount of cars, a huge island, a huge amount of fun!

"Those who want to relive their days as a horny, greased up teenage boy racer can feel free to drive around with their online mates randomly..."



■ Wheel-cam: not that interesting, and scary as hell for the midget cameraman in the harness

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
■ **WEB:** www.codemasters.com.au



■ "Oh great bowling, Warney!" said Warney

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

Tonk a Pom, all year round...

While lacking in official player licenses and domestic competitions, there's no doubt that *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007* topped EA's equivalent offering like a stinging short ball to a clueless English batsman, mainly because the controls were supremely intuitive and the six-hit button irresistible.

Full credit to EA, the overhauled batting controls in its *Cricket 07* actually made the experience enjoyable for once – but it all seems to no avail as *RPIC2007* looks about as unstoppable in its attempt to reclaim the #1 cricket franchise title as the current Australian team is in pursuing EVERY TROPHY ON EARTH (yes, even the Melbourne Cup).

Bowling in *RPIC2007* is mostly unchanged from the previous game, although you can now adjust your field settings on the fly with the shoulder buttons before you bowl a delivery – you can even set custom fields for specific batsmen, rather than having to

keep adjusting your placings every time the strike is rotated. The catching 'swing timer' now applies for close-in fielders such as the 'keeper and the slips, and you also use a similar system to throw to the stumps – nailing it in the middle of the gauge results in a direct hit, while mistiming it completely could well result in overthrows.

We all know that batting is where it's at, and this year there's a few new tools in the batsmen's kitbag. Firstly, with your confidence meter at the maximum you can now hold down **LT** to advance down the wicket in order to get to the pitch of the ball – although if you miss you must quickly tap **RT** to return to your crease lest you be stumped.

The sweep shot, which was criminally absent from the last game, is now present in two flavours. Pressing **LT** plays a gentle sweep along the carpet, whereas **RT** plays a full-blooded slog-sweep. You can also get cute and play reverse sweeps, simply by pushing towards the offside when

executing the stroke.

A couple of changes have been made to the game's HUD. When batting, you now get an aiming cone on the radar depicting the acute angle in which your shot is likely to go (provided you time it), which makes it much easier to play shots through the gaps in the field. There's also an on-screen graphic representing the direction of the wind which impacts on your bowling decisions; whether you want your paceman to bowl down breeze or your spinner to bowl across it to get more drift for example.

Once again the ICC World Cup and Champions Trophy tournaments are the only areas of the game that feature licensed players, so you'll have to resort to some *Pro Evo*-style name editing to get the real players into your test squad. The game now also features a coaching mode that walks you through batting, bowling and fielding. Could have used that last summer eh, England? **Tristan Ogilvie**



■ "Please, God? Just one sreaker?" thought the umpire

WHAT THEY SAY:

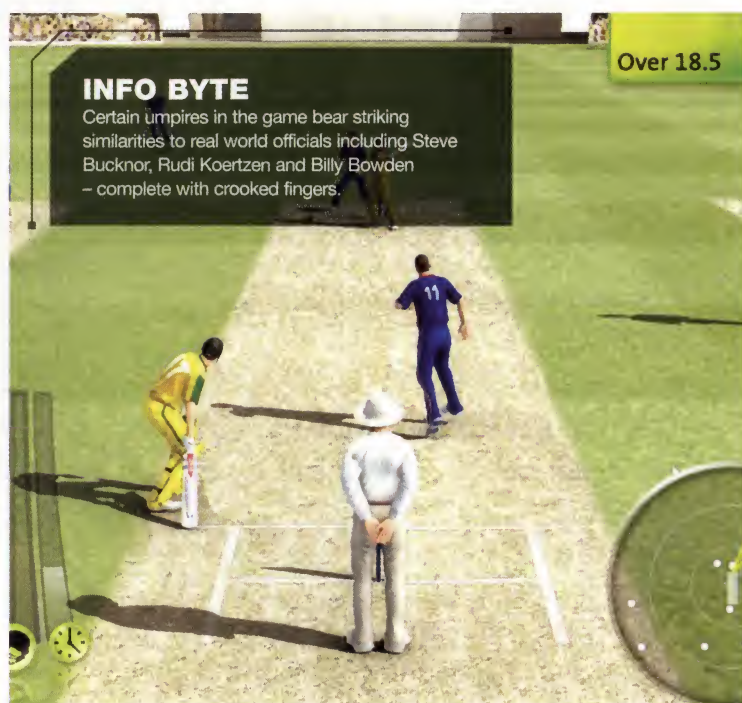
■ "[*RPIC2007*] captures all the tension, skill and intensity of world-class international cricket".

WHAT WE SAY:

■ The fielding controls need to be tightened before release, but otherwise *RPIC2007* is set to enjoy a lengthy stay at the PS2 crease.

TWENTY20 VISION

Purists might scoff at it, but there's no doubt that Twenty20 cricket is a hit with the punters. The twenty overs a side slog-a-thons last at most 80 minutes per innings, and have been so popular at both domestic and international levels that the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup will be held in South Africa this coming September. A Twenty20 tournament can also be played in *RPIC2007*, complete with authentic conditions such as the 'free hit after a no ball' rule. Of course, with the 'Slog' difficulty turned on you can essentially play Twenty20-style cricket for 50 over matches or even a test. Sucks to be a bowler!



INFO BYTE

Certain umpires in the game bear striking similarities to real world officials including Steve Bucknor, Rudi Koertzen and Billy Bowden – complete with crooked fingers.

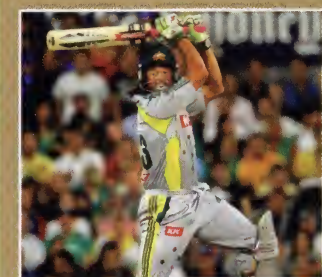
Over 18.5



■ "So long!"



■ "So that's what you do with the bat" said England





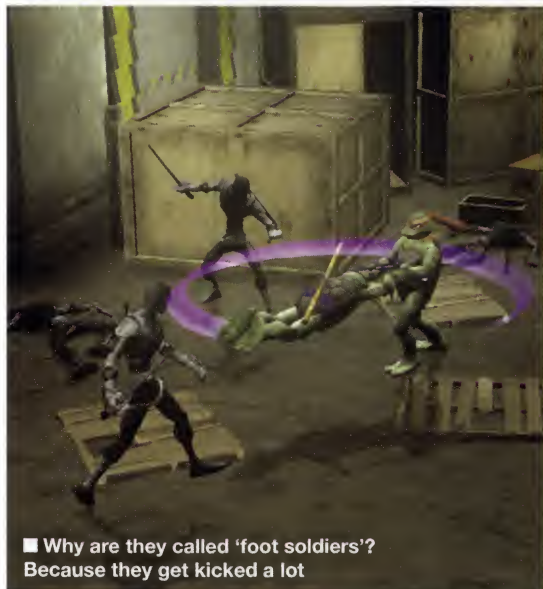
■ Why are they called 'foot soldiers'?
Because they're smelly and come in pairs



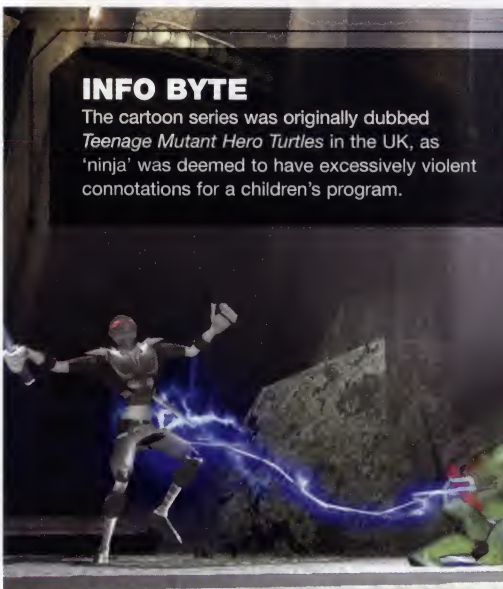
■ Donatello – he's a mutant reptile that
likes to wear purple. Just like Prince!

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com



■ Why are they called 'foot soldiers'?
Because they get kicked a lot



INFO BYTE

The cartoon series was originally dubbed *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* in the UK, as 'ninja' was deemed to have excessively violent connotations for a children's program.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

More tubular than a macaroni hula-hoop!

ff ... Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles! Heroes in a half shell – TURTLE POWER! Man, that sure was a catchy tune – and who didn't get swept up in the wave of 'Turtlemania' back at the dawn of the 1990s? Of course then came the copycats like the Battletoads, the Samurai Pizza Cats, the Biker Mice from Mars, the Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters (no, we didn't make that up). The appeal of a quartet of arse-kicking and catchphrase-spouting anthropomorphs was certainly quick to wane.

But thanks to a glossy new computer-generated feature film featuring the voices of Sarah Michelle Gellar, Kevin Smith and Patrick Stewart no less, the original fab four

(sorry, Beatles) is set for what could be a revival of radical proportions. After a couple of heinous *TMNT* games from Konami, it comes as a relief that the videogame tie-in of the new film is being handled by Ubisoft Montreal, the talented developer behind the likes of *Splinter Cell* and *Prince of Persia*.

Bad news first: *TMNT* is a singleplayer-only game. Yes, despite the turtles being "the world's most fearsome fighting team" the new game can only be played solo – although you can at least switch between turtles on the fly with a tap of the button, and when you build up your special meter you're able to invite one of the other turtles in to perform a co-op combo move.

Though the game is predominately a beat

'em up, it also borrows heavily from Ubi's own *Prince of Persia* series, as you're able to run horizontally along walls, swing gymnastically on pipes and flip back and forth between narrow gaps in order to reach higher levels of the environment. No rewinding time, mind you.

But for the most part you'll be 'kicking some shell'; with each turtle possessing their own unique attacks and special moves. In our hands-on with the game, we tore through foot soldiers in a flurry of breakdancing and twirling nunchucks as Michaelangelo, switched up to Leonardo in order to teleport Nightcrawler-style through a locked gate (yes, Leonardo can teleport for some reason) before employing the long range attacks of Donatello to finish off the first level boss; a hulking mutant gorilla with a taste for turtle.

So far there has been no sign of other classic characters such as Bebop and Rocksteady, Casey Jones, Baxter Stockman or the evil Shredder, and with precious little information about the movie released so far we can't be sure just exactly who or what the reptilian rascals are up against this time. One thing we can be confident of – we can start wearing our *TMNT* jammies again without fear of receiving a fierce wedgie at the next slumber party we attend. Cowabunga! **Tristan Ogilvie**

HIGHWAY TO SHELL

At the height of 'Turtlemania' in 1990, a concert tour was conducted across the United States featuring live-action turtles playing music together as a band. Donatello played keyboards, Leonardo played bass, Raphael played drums and sax, and Michaelangelo played lead guitar. Meanwhile the evil Shredder dropped some ill rhymes, yo', and the set list usually included 'Pizza Power', 'Cowabunga', 'April Ballad' and the blistering encore of 'Coming Out Of Our Shells!'. Rumour has it that at one point on the tour April O'Neil overdosed on Quaaludes and had to have her stomach pumped backstage at Madison Square Garden. Gnarly!



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The direction for the new *TMNT* game is a darker, more realistic Turtle experience. Gamers will engage in intense ninja combat".

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Singleplayer-only is disappointing, but there still appears to be plenty of *Prince of Persia*-style fun.



■ Why are they called 'foot soldiers'?
Because 'hand soldiers' just sounds creepy



GREAT MEMORY

Flip this little hatch here and you'll find handy sockets for Memory Stick, SD and Flash Cards.

HARD DRIVING

As well as the chrome plating, semi-transparent casing, Wi-Fi and direct Memory Stick access in the premium model, the main difference between the two PS3 models is the harddrive. The \$829 model comes with 20GB, while the \$999 model comes with 60GB.



USB SOCKETS

Tucked discretely below the Memory Stick slots you'll find four USB sockets for connecting EyeToy, microphones, PSP, controller charging cables and much more.

Words: Narayan Pattison

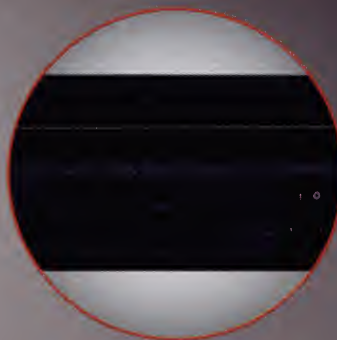
ABSOLUTE POWER

In one short month the PlayStation 3 will be available in Australia and it'd be downright irresponsible of you not to know every feature inside and out. We've tried, tested and pushed every feature to the limit. So browse through the next few pages and get a feel for this amazing piece of kit's capabilities.



IT'S A SUPERHERO

The classic lower case PlayStation font has been replaced with the much sexier Spider-Man-inspired PLAYSTATION 3 logo.



GETTING CONNECTED

If you want the ultimate PS3 experience you'll be using the Digital Out for audio and the HDMI socket for perfect Full HD 1080p visuals.



BLU-RAY DRIVE

A fully automated disc drive will suck Blu-ray discs inside the PS3, similar to car stereo CD players.



IT'S GOT THE LOOK

The PS3's case features a similar glossy black finish to the one you're used to on PSP but the casing is also semi-transparent, allowing you to see a hint of the hi-tech internals through the case. Unlike the slightly blocky PS2, the PS3 has a super slick style that will never look out of place in even the most lavish home theatres.

The PS3 itself is a little larger than you expect and considerably heavier than a PS2. The console's hefty power supply is completely internal (accounting for the extra weight) and despite its cooling fans the PS3 runs whisper quiet, even when loading games.

With its sleek motorised disc slot and subtle touch-sensitive reset and eject buttons, the PS3 looks just as good on the shelf as it does on the screen.



THE CLASSIC

The one casing feature that remains unchanged from the PS2 is the famous rotating PlayStation symbol.



SOFT TOUCH

To maintain the PS3's smooth stylish finish, both the eject and reset buttons are subtle, touch sensitive devices.

MEMORY STICKS

No, we're not talking about the memory cards you're used to on PS2. The 60GB PS3 comes with slots for you to plug in Memory Sticks, Compact Flash and SD Cards. The main use for this will be viewing your digital camera photos on your TV in glorious HD. Just snap a pic, pull out your camera's card and slot it into the PS3 to view. Thanks to the power of the PS3's Cell processor, your photos are turned into 3D polaroids on the fly that can then be flicked through on-screen. The 3D effect is very cool and looks like someone flicking through a photo album.



■ Transfer data from PSP, phones or cameras

Although the primary purpose of these sticks and cards will be photos, you will also be able to use the Memory Sticks to transfer music to your PS3 harddrive. This can also be done with the USB sockets as well. We'd also be surprised if you can't put your game saves on Memory Stick to take around to your friend's place when you can't be bothered detaching the harddrive.

If you want to manipulate photos and music and you've got the 20GB model without the Stick and Card slots you can still get all of the same functionality by connecting your PC or camera directly to your PS3 via USB cables.

CROSS-MEDIA BAR

Navigating through the PS3 operating system is instantly accessible thanks to the use of the same simple yet stylish Cross-Media Bar menu that PSP uses. The Cross-Media Bar options from left to right are:

Users

In the same way that many games allow you to store a handful of profiles within them (that keep track of your progress and options preferences) these Users operate like master profiles for your PS3. By setting up a unique name and image as your User you can create a digital persona that keeps track of your online settings, progress in games and various other preferences. Other gamers in the house can set up their own User profiles too so that you never have to worry about coming back to your console to find your settings or save games messed with.

Settings

Here you can tweak your audio and visual setup, as well as network settings and various other options.

Photo

Transfer digital pictures onto your PS3 from Memory Stick, SD Cards, Compact Flash Cards or direct from your PSP over Wi-Fi.

Music

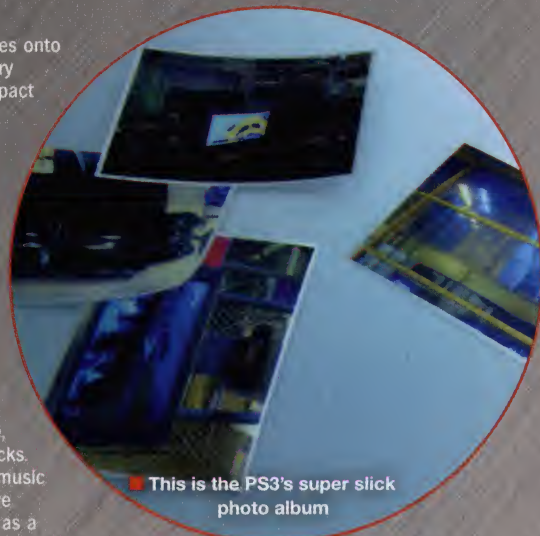
Any music CD you slip into the PS3 drive can obviously be accessed here. What's much more interesting though is the PS3's ability to access and transfer music to its harddrive from online, CDs, and Memory Sticks. Once you've put the music on the PS3's harddrive you can either use it as a convenient stereo and listen to the hundreds of tracks stored on it or, even better, access these tracks while playing games and customise your own in-game soundtracks.

Video

Download or transfer trailers in gorgeous HD directly to your PS3's harddrive. Don't be at all surprised either if you can purchase and download entire HD movies from PlayStation's online store before long.

Game

This one's pretty straightforward. Any time you whack a game in, flicking to this section will bring up a sexy title screen where you can boot the game from. You can also access and manage your game saves here. Any PS3 demos or mini games that you download from the PlayStation Store will also be shown here in a nifty scroll-down menu below the Games icon.



■ This is the PS3's super slick photo album

Network

Select this funky globe icon to take your PS3 online. The first thing you'll probably do is test your multiplayer skills online. And with *Resistance* offering insane 40-player deathmatches, you'd be nuts not to. Four-player co-op with *Rainbow Six Vegas* is another essential online experience. As well as online gaming, you can log into the PlayStation store through your PS3 to download games, demos and HD videos. Another great feature allows you to browse websites from the comfort of your couch via your PS3 – with up to six browser windows at a time.

Friends

One of the cool new features of online gaming is that you can keep track of the people that you meet during games and add them to your Friends list. The more you game online the more friends you'll bump into that you enjoy gaming with. Whenever you go online you'll be able to see which of your friends are also online and invite them into your game or join theirs. It's also possible to send text, voice and video messages to anyone on your Friends list.





PS3 Demos

We'd be surprised if this wasn't the first section of the store you browsed. Currently on the store you'll find demos of PS3 games including *MotorStorm*, *Resistance*, *Formula One*, *Gran Turismo HD* and *Genji*. We expect at least a few more demos to be added before the Aussie launch as well. So far the average size of demos is around 500Mb. Although it's a little disappointing that you can't use your PS3 for anything else while it downloads content, we were impressed at the download speeds. Using cable broadband we managed to download the 650Mb *Gran Turismo HD* demo in under ten minutes (see page 38 for our hands-on report).

Fear not if you're worried the PlayStation store's downloadable demos will make our upcoming PS3 demo discs redundant. Our discs will offer exclusive demos not available on the store, as well as providing a great way to enjoy PS3 demos without worrying about filling up your broadband download limit or your PS3's harddrive.



Full games

No you can't download actual PS3 games... yet. The games you can download are unique mini games that have been designed for quick pick up and play antics. Games released so far include *Tekken Dark Resurrection*, *Gripshift*, *Gol Sudoku*, *Crash Guns Chaos DLX*, *Blast Factor* and *Lemmings*. Although no exact price point has been announced yet, we expect these games to cost around \$20. To allow you to purchase with confidence, demo versions of these games will also be available for free. By far the best of the first batch of titles is

Tekken Dark Resurrection, a far superior 1080p version of the arcade game that the PSP title was based on. *Blast Factor* is like a futuristic version of *Space Invaders*, which sees you control the flight of your ship with the left stick while you aim its rotating laser gun with the right stick. *Crash Guns Chaos DLX* is a crisp 1080p shooter inspired by the classic *Smash TV* concept where players are thrown into mini arenas with a gun and forced to shoot monsters for cash or die trying. *Gripshift*, *Lemmings* and *Gol Sudoku* are all fairly straightforward updates of PSP titles with new HD visuals.



PLAYSTATION STORE

Being able to log into the PlayStation store whenever you want is like having a videogame shop in your house without having to wait in line. New game demos, HD videos and retro games are added regularly for your downloading pleasure.



Game Trailers

Fancy a 1080p look at the *Lair* trailer or many other upcoming titles? This is the section to hit. As with everything in PlayStation land, you don't have to feel left out if you don't have a super HDTV. You can download standard definition versions of all trailers on the site and, as an added bonus, the SD files are smaller and will download faster than the HD ones. Most 1080p trailers are between 100-250Mb.

PSone downloads to be played on your PS3, where your HDTV would make the dated graphics more of an eyesore, these retro classics are downloaded to PSP where they're a perfect fit for the smaller screen and pick up and play style of PSP. Although no price point has been revealed yet, like the downloadable PS3 mini games, we expect the PSone

Blu-ray Trailers

Want to show off your new HDTV with ludicrously razor-sharp video? You'll find plenty of knockout 1080p trailers here. We couldn't resist picking up a Blu-ray copy of Will Ferrell's latest cracker, *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*, but at \$49.95 for new releases there's no denying Blu-ray movies are expensive. This trailers section offers a great way to get a taste of a variety of Blu-ray movies without bankrupting yourself in the process.



titles to be priced at \$10. Some of the classics so far released include *Syphon Filter*, *Tekken 2*, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jumping Flash*. You'll need a bit of free space on your PSP's memory card though as these PSone games range from 200-600Mb.

Film Trailers

Last time we checked this section was pretty sparsely filled. The highlight of the first batch is *Fred Claus*, starring Vince Vaughn as Santa's smack-talking lay about brother. As we'd expect, all trailers offer sparkly 1080p support.

PSone Games

Obviously 10 year-old games can't compete side-by-side with today's stunners but there's unique thrill to replaying some of the classics that started it all. Rather than designing the

Downloadable Content

One of the greatest things about having a harddrive for PS3 is that you often don't need to wait a couple of years for a sequel before you can enjoy some fresh content for your favourite game. *GTAIV* has already announced that there will be additional missions and locations that can be downloaded in the months following release. Expect to be able to download features like extra characters, vehicles, maps and even new game modes in many PS3 games.

SIX DEGREES OF INTEGRATION

At first glance the PS3 controller looks identical to the PS2 DualShock but there are a number of subtle but very important differences. First up, the new controller's name – SIXAXIS – refers to the hidden motion sensing equipment inside the controller. The SIXAXIS also has a new PlayStation master control button, analogue triggers and is totally wireless.

We're pleased to report that after months of heavy use the SIXAXIS stands up admirably. It's instantly familiar, the new triggers offer much more control and the motion-sensing is super accurate. As for the lack of rumble... who cares? We honestly didn't miss it.

PLAYSTATION BUTTON

Pressing this button when your PS3 is turned off will power it up remotely. During gameplay the PS button brings up a menu that lets you quit the game you are in and return to the Cross-Media Bar, turn off the controller or power off the console itself.

WIRELESS

You never need to worry about tangled cords again because up to seven controllers can be run completely wirelessly off the one PS3 via Bluetooth. And unlike some other consoles that make you buy rechargeable batteries and cables, the battery and USB recharge cable come free with both PS3 models. You can game for 24 hours on the one charge. Then, when your battery is getting low (which you can check easily on-screen) you just plug the recharge cord in and keep gaming away.

TRIGGER FINGERS

Unlike the flat **△** and **○** buttons on DualShocks, these buttons now feel like real triggers on the SIXAXIS. Each trigger has a centimetre of movement in it and can also detect how far in it's depressed to give you analogue control over features like a car's acceleration.

MOTION-SENSING

Hidden inside the SIXAXIS is some very sophisticated motion-sensing equipment that measures your hand movement across six axis. Being able to detect roll, pitch and yaw movement is perfect for controlling vehicles like cars and planes. The SIXAXIS can also detect acceleration along the X, Y and Z planes (up, down, left, right, forwards and backwards) which can be used for subtle manipulation of objects in games.

So far the motion-controls have already been implemented in a number of games. *Warhawk*, *Blazing Angels* and *Lair* let you roll, turn and dive your plane (or dragon) with a subtle flick of your wrist. Games like *Call of*

Duty 3 and *Resistance* take advantage of your normal panic reflex to let you shrug off enemies that have grabbed you by shaking the SIXAXIS.

Many racing games also plan to use the SIXAXIS' motion-sensors as a virtual steering wheel. The first game we've play-tested with this is *MotorStorm*. We found our driving skills weren't as comfortable during the practise laps we tried with the motion control. This is hardly a surprising result though considering we've spent 10 years with the sticks and only a few hours with the motion-control. Whatever your preference, motion-control in racers is still a very welcome addition, and one sure to appeal to people who've never even used an analogue stick.



BLU-RAY PLAYBACK

With PSone using CDs and PS2 being DVD-based, it makes sense that the almighty PS3 will need a brand-new disc format to keep up with its insane processing power. Weighing in at a whopping 50GB each, Blu-ray discs have more storage capacity than six dual-layered DVDs.

In terms of gaming content this means we will no longer have to put up with compressed audio or limited environments. Developers will have more than enough space to fulfil any audio or visual designs they can come up with.

Arguably the most exciting feature of the PS3's Blu-ray functionality is being able to play Blu-ray movies right out of the box. When you stop and think that the dedicated Blu-ray players hitting the market right now are priced at \$2,000, that's one hell of a great bonus feature on top of the PS3's gaming tech.

Blu-ray movies will knock your eyes out of their sockets with picture clarity unlike anything you've ever seen. While DVD movies have a resolution of 576x720 pixels, Blu-ray has an unbelievable 1080x1920 pixels [2,073,600 individual pixels]. We watched a Blu-ray version of Jessica Alba's *Into the Blue* recently and we've got to say, once you've seen two million bits of Jessica on-screen at once, you can't go back.

In America the launch PS3s were bundled with free copies of Will Ferrell's hilarious *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* on Blu-ray (pictured). Here's hoping we get the same star treatment in Australia and NZ.



BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY

PS3s may use state-of-the-art Blu-ray disc drives but true to form for PlayStation, the PS3's disc drive is still perfectly compatible with previous disc formats like DVDs and CDs. This means that you'll be able to throw in all of your favourite PS2 and PSone games, as well as your DVD movies and music CDs, and have them boot up and work instantly.

As well as being a convenient way to play your old PS2 games, all your favourite PS2 classics have been given a visual upgrade thanks to 480p HD support for every game (where only a handful of PS2 games supported this resolution originally). Bring on *God of War II* already.

You can play and save all of your games right out of the box too, but if you have some PS2 and PSone save files that you can't bare to part with Sony will be

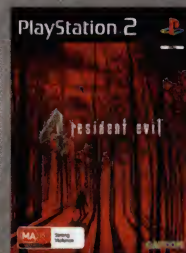
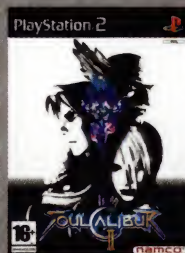
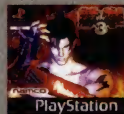
selling a memory card adapter so you can plug in your old cards and save the files to the PS3 harddrive. The adapter is selling for \$14.95 USD in America so we'd expect \$25 locally.

One thing that hasn't been discussed yet is exactly how gaming peripherals will work. The USB devices like EyeToy, Buzz's buzzers and *SingStar*'s mics will be able to be plugged straight into the PS3's USB slots and used instantly. For peripherals that use PSone/PS2 controller sockets (like *Guitar Hero*'s guitars, and lightguns) no announcements have been made yet but we're confident an adapter will be available at some point.

The bottom line is that unless you're a hardcore *Guitar Hero* or *Time Crisis* fan you'd be crazy not to trade your PS2 in when you buy your PS3 and save yourself \$100 off the price.

BLU-RAY VS. HD DVD

There are currently two competing formats for the next-generation of DVD movies – Sony's Blu-ray and Toshiba's HD DVD. Both formats are capable of displaying movies in Full High Definition (1080p) but Blu-ray has considerably more of the Hollywood studios backing it than HD DVD does. In terms of storage capacity Blu-ray is the clear winner with 50GB on a dual-layer disc, while HD DVD struggles to keep up with 30GB on its dual-layered version. In an effort to catch up to Blu-ray Toshiba announced it's working on a triple-layer disc that will be 45GB. Unfortunately for Toshiba, Sony's also working on a quad-layer 100GB Blu-ray disc. Check and mate.



TRISTAN

If I could sum the PS3 up in one word, that word would be 'supersexerrific'. Which obviously isn't a real word, but the simple fact is the English language just doesn't contain superlatives striking enough to do the epic new console justice. Maybe there's a word for it in French – I don't know, I don't speak it. Maybe French people can articulately convey how awesome the PS3 is to each other, but all I can do is just sit here, rocking back and forth muttering, "MotorStorm... need... MotorStorm" over and over again. Can March get here any sooner?



NICK

My god. Just when I thought the PSP was the embodiment of sleek and sexy tech, along comes the PS3. The controller is the classic design we all know and love, but is now wireless and incredibly light. While I knew *Resistance* was going to rock out hard (and it does – *Insomniac* knows guns), *MotorStorm* was a real surprise for me. The experience of desperately trying to forge a path through a maze of rocks, mud and exploding wreckage when you're barreling along at breakneck speed on the very verge of losing control and plummeting off a cliff... Wow!

NAZ

When I finally got to pick up a real living, breathing PS3, the first thing I thought was "Oof. I can't believe I grunted trying to lift it up. I really need to hit the gym and get back into shape." To boost my self esteem from that little embarrassment I gave Nick a swift kick in the love spuds, then threatened to fire him if he didn't stop crying like a baby. Problem solved. Oh, what did I think of the PS3? Didn't you read the last six pages I wrote? Get off my back already.



LUKE

When Naz asked me to tell him what I thought of the PS3 in 100 words I told him I was speechless. "So?" he said, "Are your fingers broken? Start typing!" Or it was something like that anyway. I didn't really hear him because my mind was elsewhere. For the past few days I've been drifting off into the same daydream – I'm playing *MotorStorm* on my couch, loving every single second of it. Of course, in that dream I'm also a billionaire playboy and President of the Universe – but don't let that distract you.



September 1951



We have been fighting the enemy
for three months. Our troops are
becoming frail. They began to
break through all our defences.

The fear in my
brother's eyes carries
me through from
hour to hour.



MA 15+ Strong combat violence
RESTRICTED

RESISTANCE
FALL OF MAN

INSOMNIAC
GAMES

playstation.com.au

resistancefallofman.com

This is living

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September 1951



We must stay true to our belief. A belief that we can crush
this evil plague sweeping across our land.
The battle is just beginning.

humanity must prevail



"Our troops have been slaughtered, Europe has fallen, and the only remaining hope of saving humanity from the Chimera is you Lt Hale ... Good luck".

Resistance: Fall of Man is a first person action game exclusive to the PLAYSTATION 3. It is 1951 and historic warfare collides with a deadly race which is threatening to wipeout all humans. You must take on the role of US Ranger Nathan Hale, and use one of the most amazing arsenals of weaponry ever seen to fight back for mankind.



PLAYSTATION 3

WIN A PS3

PLUS THE ESSENTIAL TOM CLANCY GAME PACK!

Hands up if you want a PS3? Now both hands up? Ha! We totally just stole your wallet. Just kidding! We're not here to take from you – we're here to give. We've got another shiny new Premium PS3 worth \$999.95 here and we want to give it away. You know the PS3 – the most powerful gaming console the world has ever seen? The one that's going to completely revolutionise gaming as we know it? That's the one!

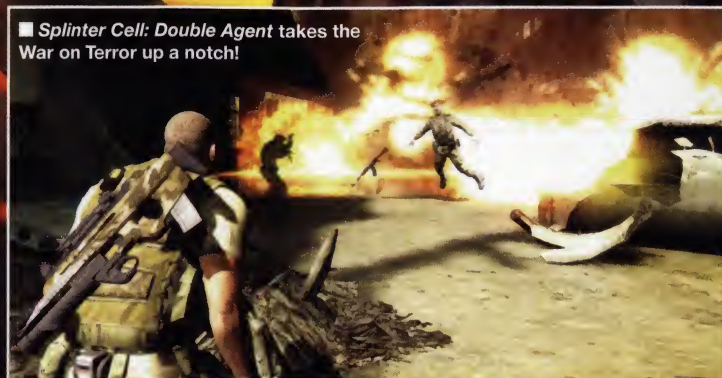
Thanks to our good friends at Ubisoft we've got a Premium PS3 console and the essential *Tom Clancy* game pack featuring both the superb tactical shooter *Rainbow Six Vegas* (it's like the TV show 24 but with more guns and better acting) and the super sneaky *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* (by far Sam Fisher's best game yet) to giveaway to one exceptionally lucky reader. With a new PS3 and this *Tom Clancy* pack you'll be able to take on terrorists, save some hostages, cry tears of joy over the ridiculously high definition Blu-ray movies and be the envy of all your mates by owning the hottest piece of technology on the planet! You can put your hands down now – and get entering!

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

You'll be getting the best of the best with this Premium PS3. It comes with a 60GB hard drive and the new PS3 controller that's wireless, rechargeable and motion-sensing. Your PS3 will also connect to the Internet and your PSP wirelessly right out of the box. For the ultimate in picture clarity, no matter what TV you're watching it on, your PS3 supports every video cable from composite to the purely digital HDMI and every resolution from 480i standard definition to 1080p super high definition. With this sucker setup in your lounge room you could start charging admission and retire off the proceeds.



■ All bets are off in *Rainbow Six Vegas*



■ *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* takes the War on Terror up a notch!

COMING SOON

Check back next issue for the exclusive reviews of *Rainbow Six Vegas* and *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*!

PLAYSTATION 3



HOW TO ENTER

The city of Las Vegas is located in which US state?

Answer the above question, mark your entry with 'Tom Clancy PS3 giveaway' as the subject and send it to ops@derwenthoward.com.au or post entries via snail mail to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW, 1355 with 'Tom Clancy PS3 giveaway' clearly marked on the front of the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your answer and your name, address, age and contact number. Good luck! Competition closes on 25 March 2007 and is also open to NZ residents.



Get the whole picture

The PlayStation 3 is capable of truly amazing visuals but you're only going to be able to enjoy a fraction of the experience if you don't have a TV capable of keeping up with it. To help make sense of the whole HDTV scene and explain why 1080p Full HD is so important we've taken the PS3's perfect partner, the Bravia X-series, through its paces.



Bravia X-series

There's something about Sony's latest range of Bravia LCD TVs that separates them from other, lesser displays. It's what we like to simply call, "X-appeal". "X-appeal" isn't easy to define. Part of it is the stunning design; part of it is the incredibly sophisticated technology built into the TV that gives you one of the crispest pictures ever seen. Part of it is the seamless integration it

has with other Hi-Def gadgets, like PS3, Blu-ray players and HD camcorders. The first time you cast your eyes over an X-series Bravia, you will be overcome with an uncontrollable urge to reach out and stroke its floating glass frame. It has an elegance that will equally impress your conservative grandparents and your out-of-control mates, while the ability to choose from an additional



PS3 Games

Arguably the PS3's greatest visual feature is its ability to render games at 1080p Full HD. There are already a good number of PS3 games supporting 1080p (*Ridge Racer 7*, *Virtua Tennis 3*, *Virtua Fighter 5*, *F.E.A.R.*, *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, *Full Auto 2*, *NBA Street Homecourt* and *NBA 2K7*) and as the console matures a larger and larger portion of games will be 1080p compatible. If you don't hook your PS3 up to a 1080p TV you'll literally only be seeing half the picture that the game is capable of. It's also important to be aware that PS3 games that only support 720p (*MotorStorm*, *Resistance* etc) will also look superior on a 1080p TV than they would on a regular HDTV because the 720p games are being scaled up to the 1080p display. 720p games scaled up to 1080p won't look as detailed as a true 1080p games but they will look better than they would running on regular HDTVs.

With its native 1080p Full HD display the Bravia X-series is perfectly suited to PS3 gaming. Many other TVs out there proudly claim to be HDTVs but only have a native resolution of 768x1366 (1,049,088 pixels). These TVs will be able to accept HD signals like 720p and 1080i but because of their lower resolution they are only capable of displaying 720p correctly. 1080i games need to be scaled back down to the TV's 768 lines, resulting in a loss of detail. Unlike most quasi HDTVs, the Bravia X-series has a whopping 1080x1920 (2,073,600 pixels) native resolution, meaning it can display every conceivable gaming resolution perfectly.

five optional colour bezels (plus silver, which is the default option) to frame your display makes it the perfect centrepiece of any home theatre setup.

The LCD display on the X-series comes in sizes ranging between 40-52 inches, all offering an unbeatable 1080p resolution. But it's not just superior resolution that separates this behemoth from other TVs on the market – thanks to Wide Colour Gamut technology, gradual transitions from light to dark are almost totally free from banding, and black levels remain deep and inky even during scenes with both bright and dark objects on screen. Throw in the fact that you don't need a separate set-top box to watch HDTV thanks to a built-in HD digital tuner, plus two HDMI inputs for the best possible video and audio quality from your PS3 and other High-Def components, and you have one of the most impressive LCD TVs we've ever seen. It's so good that it was awarded the prestigious "Gold award" from *Australian T3* magazine. 🏆



Web Browsing

As well as allowing you to enjoy 1080p gaming and movies, the Bravia X-series' incredible resolution also comes in handy for browsing the web. As long as you've got a broadband connection your PS3 can browse the web straight out of the box. You can even plug in a USB or Blue Tooth keyboard for effortless web browsing. At 1080p you'll find even the most text-heavy sites a breeze to browse. If for whatever reason you still prefer web browsing on your PC, you can even plug your PC straight into the Bravia X-series and use it as an insanely cool PC monitor.



Blu-ray Movies

With more than 50 Blu-ray movies due on the market next month when PS3 launches, there's already a sizeable selection of 1080p Full HD movies to experience. With its native 1080p resolution, stunning contrast levels and rich colours, the Bravia X-series is also the perfect way to experience the next generation of home cinema. Where DVD looks good, Blu-ray boasts superior sound and unbelievable picture quality thanks to its 1080p resolution being six times higher than DVD. Although you'd have to be a seriously hardcore movie buff to replace all of your existing DVD library on Blu-ray, you'd be crazy not to opt for Blu-ray versions of upcoming flicks like *Spider-Man 3* rather than the standard DVD versions.



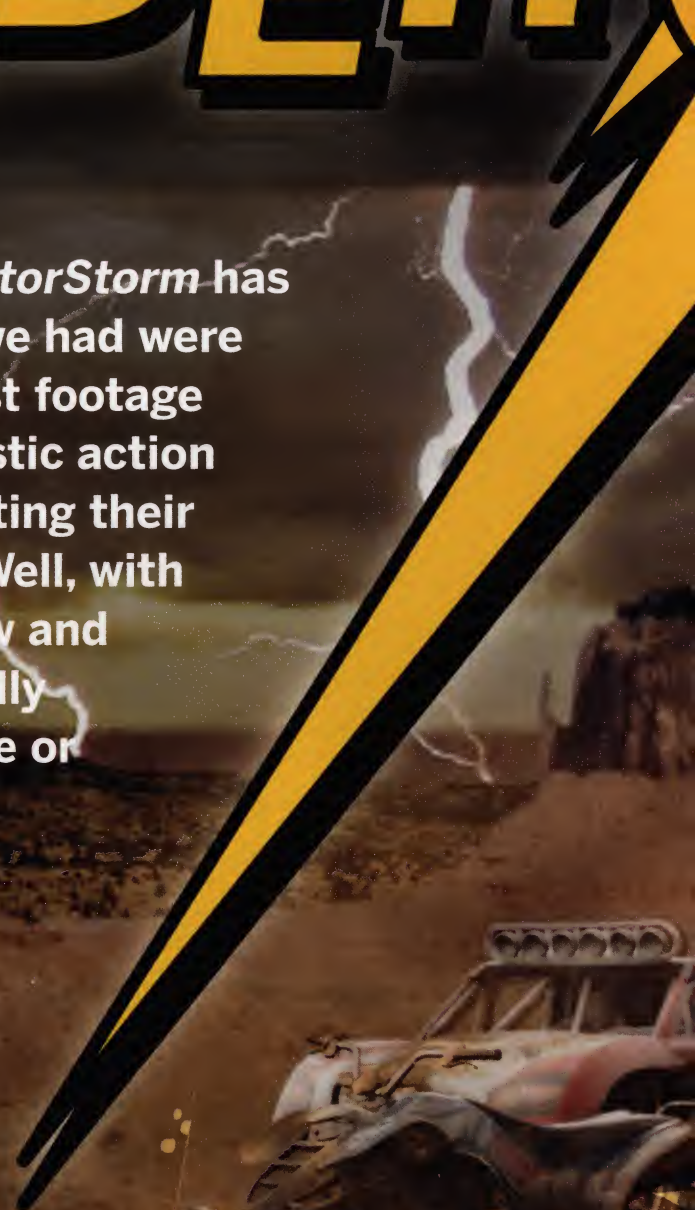
HDTV

When you feel like taking a break from your PS3, the Bravia X-series also offers a perfect chance to enjoy HDTV. This Bravia has an in-built HDTV tuner that allows you to plug any TV antenna in and receive free-to-air HDTV without having to purchase a set-top box. When watching HDTV you will get a crystal clear digital signal, a widescreen picture and even additional channels not available on standard free-to-air. At 1080i HDTV is not quite as sharp as Blu-ray or PS3 games but it looks infinitely better than standard TV.

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

THUNDER

Part *WRC*, part *Burnout* – Evolution's *MotorStorm* has been teasing us ever since E3 2005. All we had were questions. Would it be as good as the first footage suggested? Would it deliver the crash-tastic action it promised? Would it have detractors eating their words and competitors eating its dust? Well, with the final Japanese version on shelves now and the Australian release not far off, we finally have answers. So is it a bolt from the blue or a storm in a teacup?





On December 14 last year *MotorStorm* was unleashed to the Japanese public and quickly became the best-selling PS3 game thus far. It wasn't long after that our very own copy of the genre-bending racer slipped into the OPS office in an unassuming brown package. It was a quiet Wednesday morning, in fact, when the one game we knew would squeeze *Resistance* from our PS3 landed with a thud on our desks. It was a loud Friday evening when we had to have the controllers prised from our sweaty hands after three days of non-stop racing. Every now and then a game comes along that stops people in their tracks.

MotorStorm is one of those games.

RIDERS ON THE STORM

Quite simply, *MotorStorm* is the right game for the right time. *Resistance* is awesome, but even it can't pull a crowd like *MotorStorm*. *MotorStorm* is a game that wears its thrills on its sleeves and assaults the senses with a constant stream of aural and visual delight. For three full days of back-to-back racing the OPS enclave was home to a rotating band of co-workers from all corners of the office, none of whom had stopped by to pick up a PS3 pad previously. Not once during our solid stint did we not have an audience. They were transfixed by the mayhem on-screen. Threading a bouncing motorcycle between two trucks rollicking through a tight, muddy creek bed without being sandwiched and mashed into a paste brought a hearty cheer from even the most nonchalant spectator. Likewise, slamming a wildly out-of-control 4X4 into a jagged outcrop had our cordon of onlookers groaning and chuckling as it corkscrewed through the sky. We were constantly fending off excitedly pointed fingers motioning towards blazing opponents spiralling through the air. It's tough to do while simultaneously trying to speed under the fiery wreck lest we be crushed like a can. We're pretty sure the constant gasping was sucking the oxygen from the room, but it's impossible not to be impressed. There's just something remarkably mesmerizing about it. The stunning graphics, the stark raving mad racing – it just refuses to be ignored.

RIDE THE LIGHTNING

MotorStorm is a poster boy for the age-old credo 'quality over quantity'. When you have dozens and dozens of tracks it's tough to ever really get to know them all. No doubt you'll have a few faves, but there'll invariably be quite a few completely uninspiring and rushed ones that do little for you whatsoever.

MotorStorm bucks that trend.

Instead of tracks upon tracks that run the gambit from rad to rubbish *MotorStorm* features a handful of circuits that are firmly entrenched in the rad category. *MotorStorm* is a lot like an album – only the best tracks make it on. Evolution has whittled the experience down to its leanest and best.

MotorStorm's eight tracks are vastly different from each other. Coyote Rage, the first track you'll encounter in the game, is a fairly straightforward circuit – a few hilly turns, a mud-filled gully flanked by some dusty crests and the odd jump. Rain God Mesa, on the other hand, is a significantly more taxing exercise. Set upon a massive rock formation protruding from the desert, the course winds around a cliff top bringing you perilously close to the edge for the bulk of it. Stray off the side and it's a long trip down, so you'll need to take care you're not distracted by the ridiculously detailed landscape stretching off into the horizon. The Mudpool starts by launching into a



■ Man, this guy is totally trucked...

■ We never tyre of *MotorStorm*! BOOM TISH!



■ "Man, my suit's dirty. Can this day get any worse?"



■ The 71 is for how many bones he has broken



mantles. It tends to be faster, but it's far more treacherous and is dotted with tough jumps and tricky turns. You'll find different routes work for different vehicles, and sometimes a mixture of the two is called for. *MotorStorm's* other track trump card is its persistent terrain deformation, something we've written about at length. Tyres cut deep grooves through the thick mud and trackside objects can be littered across the rack. There's not quite as much flotsam spread about as you'd see in the *FlatOut* series on PS2, but it's no less interactive.

LIGHTNING CRASHES

Of course, the real stars of any racing game worth its salt are the vehicles, and *MotorStorm* is no exception. Evolution has assembled a superior stable of off-road mean machines, some of which look decidedly prehistoric while others wouldn't appear out of place in the Dakar rally. There is a range of different vehicle classes, each of which have their own specific strengths and weaknesses – as you'd expect.

Motorcycles and ATVs boast great speed and manoeuvrability but they tend to get bogged down in mud and are extremely sensitive to any impact. You'll need to steer well clear of your opponents as any bump, jolt or graze could spell certain disaster. Get clipped by a rival and you'll crash. Slam into another car from behind and you'll crash. Get smacked in the helmet by a buggy sailing overhead and you'll crash. In other



IT'S A KNOCKOUT!

Immensely satisfying is the ability to deliver a jaw-busting hook to the face of fellow motorcyclists or ATV riders and send them cartwheeling off their steed and into the dust, potentially being run over by their own tumbling bike in the process. Keep your wits about you though because *MotorStorm's* wily opponents can give it as hard as they can take it – don't be surprised if an errant elbow from another racer leaves you with a mouth full of loose teeth and an arse full of gravel!



huge bog bowl and The Rock Hopper has you bounding over precarious rock ridges. The Grizzly is a long course with two clear ways to tackle it and Dust Devil is a fast, open burn through the desert. The Tenderiser is an unforgiving, muddy circuit in a canyon packed with stray stones and boulders and Sidewinder Gulch is a ball-busting combination of the whole lot. *MotorStorm's* tracks may be few in number, but they each have their own distinct personality and you may find it tough to nail down your favourite.

One of the common threads through all of *MotorStorm's* tracks however, is the high road and the low road. The low road is most often a soggy, mud-filled trench lined on both sides with unforgiving walls and peppered with debris and abandoned car wrecks. It's also usually the safest route, but the soft surface slows down bikes and low-riding vehicles. The high road is generally a dry and dusty blitz across ledges and cliff





FAVOURITE MOTORSTORM MOMENTS



TRISTAN

The motorbikes are certainly speedy and manoeuvrable, but they're also by far and away the most dangerous vehicles on the *MotorStorm* grid. Everything on the track is a potential landmine when you're hooning along at top speed on a quad or two-wheeler – bumps in the road, jagged rock clusters and of course the bastard AI racers can all leave you gripping the handlebars in mid-air while your bike bursts into a ball of flames and shrapnel beneath you. The impressive ragdolling of the riders is what really sells the slow-motion scrapes with death, with your leather-clad bkie performing involuntary aerobics as they twirl through the air and violently thud back down to earth, leaving man-shaped ditches in the fully deformable track and sending them from quad-bike to quadriplegic. Ouch!



NAZ

One of the best things about *MotorStorm* is its AI. These buggers are insane road ragers who are much more concerned with taking you out than winning the race. You'll see them constantly flipping you the bird, punching you off motorcycles and ramming you off cliffs. One hilarious racing highlight saw a cheeky opponent taunt us with an obscene finger-gesture, only to be wiped-out a split-second later by the remains of an exploding rally car cartwheeling through the air. But wait, it gets better. After he'd been knocked off the bike, his unconscious body was steamrolled under the wheels of a speeding truck. Whammy!

■ The big rigs will ruin your day in the blink of an eye



words, you need to treat the bikes with as much respect as you treat your opponents.

On the other end of the spectrum you'll find the trucks, which are hulking great lumps of steel that take as long to accelerate as they do to slow down. Of course, slowing down is rarely a necessity when you can plough through the field like a hot knife through butter. The rest of the roster is a mix of those two extremes. Buggies aren't the fastest vehicles available but their soft suspension makes handling tricky terrain and jumps far more forgiving. Rally cars are speedy but their low chassis means you're often liable to get a bad bounce landing from big air. Racing trucks and Mud Pluggers (4X4s, utes, SUVs and trophy trucks) have decent suspension and can dish out some punishment, but they can be sluggish.

The handling model is tight and intuitive (which is nothing surprising considering *Evolution* has had no less than five *WRC* titles under its belt) and falls comfortably between arcade-style simplicity and simulation-level class. You never feel like you're on rails like *Burnout* or *Ridge Racer*, but equally you're never at odds with the kind of tiresomely tough handling physics you've mastered in *V8 Supercars* or *Gran Turismo*. Yes, different surfaces have different grip coefficients (try to turn in



■ "The glare! My eyes! The goggles do nothing!"

■ "I regret nothing..."





■ That's not just any mud, that's next gen mud. Show a little respect

mud at high speed and you'll get nowhere) and some of the heavier juggernauts have horrendous understeer when cornering, but for the most part it's rarely hard to keep your hot rod pointed in the right direction. Every vehicle has a boost feature too, which is vital if you want to stay competitive. Your boost meter is linked to your engine temperature, so it's unlimited but if you max it out you'll explode. In the later races boost becomes even more essential, whether it's escaping a brutal pounding from a nearby adversary or blowing up a fraction before the finish line to use the brief but handy jolt in speed the explosion gives you to leapfrog over the car in front and snatch first place.

WHY DOES IT ALWAYS RAIN ON ME?

And the best thing? It's only going to get better. The Japanese version is surprisingly spartan, stripped bare of almost every feature you'd expect in a racing game. Most notably, multiplayer (online or split-screen) of any kind is totally absent. It also lacks many of the additional modes you've come to expect, like time trials, free-runs and qualifying

(you always start at the back of the grid). Further still, the nifty custom soundtrack option where the game applies some reverb and a bunch of other extravagant post-processing techniques to the personal music on your hard drive, to make them sound like they're being pumped live into the desert, is nowhere to be seen either. From what we've gathered we can expect all this from the Australian release in March. What's worth mentioning, however, is that even without these expected inclusions *MotorStorm* is still one of the most frantic and enjoyable racers we've ever played.

In fact, it may well be THE most frantic and enjoyable racer we've ever played. There's a storm brewing. Stay indoors... ⚡

ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Evolution has plucked the very best features from a lot of great games to produce one hell of a racing monster. Here are a few:

WRC: RALLY EVOLVED

Evolution's own pet PS2 series, *WRC* is far from as ludicrously over-the-top as *MotorStorm*, but it's clear Evolution's panache for creating absolutely stunning vistas and sweeping landscapes started here.



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

MotorStorm's spectacular crashes are uncannily familiar to another racer that's close to the heart of the OPS team. *Burnout 3: Takedown* virtually made accidents an art form but *MotorStorm* takes it off the road and off the charts!



ROAD RASH

You can't mention motorcycle combat without a nod to the *Road Rash* series. Smacking people off bikes was fun in 1991, and it's still fun now. In fact, it's probably more fun. Yes, it's definitely more fun.



SSX

Remember when snowboarding games were cool? No? Well, it was a while ago. At any rate, *MotorStorm* comes from the same school of track design as *SSX* — a few really good ones beats a whole bunch of average ones.



FLATOUT 2

Destructible obstacles that litter the track for the remainder of the race? Loads of car-on-car carnage? Fans of the *FlatOut* franchise will find plenty to be fond of in *MotorStorm*, we guarantee it!



十
神
社



M

Moderate sexual
references, Moderate
fantasy violence



PlayStation 2

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GOD. HERO. HUNTER. SAVIOUR.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE - AUSTRALIA

"OKAMI IS A GAME THAT WILL LITERALLY MAKE YOUR JAW DROP AND YOUR EYES BLEED, GUARANTEED, AND IF YOU THOUGHT THAT THIS SORT OF REACTION WAS A FEAT RESERVED ONLY FOR CONSOLES WITH THE ABSURD GRAPHICAL MIGHT OF THE PS3, THEN THINK AGAIN."

"OKAMI, HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE ONE OF THE BEST GAMES OF 2007, ON ANY SYSTEM, AND THAT INCLUDES ANYTHING ON THE ALMIGHTY PS3. WE CAN'T WAIT TO GET OUR GRUBBY PAWS ON THIS ONE"

PSM2 - 92% GOLD AWARD

"OKAMI IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GAME ON PS2;
A JOY TO PLAY"



IN STORES NOW



March 2007

WEEK 122

January 2007						February 2007						March 2007					
M	30	2	9	16	23	M		6	13	20	27	M		4	11	18	25
T	31	3	10	17	24	T		7	14	21	28	T		5	12	19	26
W		4	11	18	25	W	1	8	15	22		W		6	13	20	27
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		7	14	21	28	S	4	11	18	25		S	2	9	16	23	30
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23 Friday



BEST GAMES OF 2007

For PlayStation fans, 2007 is going to be a year bigger and more exciting than the contents of Salma Hayek's t-shirt. For the first time we've got three different platforms to choose from, the PS3, PS2 and PSP, and hundreds of games to scratch your gaming itch with. Here's a sample of what's in store...

WORDS: Anthony O'Connor, Mark Serrels, James Ellis, Dave Kozicki and Tristan Ogilvie

PS3

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
RELEASE: LATE 2007

■ Horsingding – chicks totally dig it (or at least they did until cars were invented)

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Prince of Persia styled for the next gen?

Set during the third crusade (not the *Indiana Jones* movie with Sean Connery, the actual crusade), this is sort of a historical *Hitman*. You play a feared and skilled assassin whose every move and kill has consequences.

As the graphics show the game looks utterly amazing. You can interact with those crowds, they're not just there for show. Audiences at E3 2006 were wowed. Many thought the scenes were pre-rendered. They are, in fact, in-game screens.

As well as crowds you can interact with the environments. If it looks like you

can climb it – you probably can. Expect plenty of freedom of movement with this puppy. Your goals are able to be attained in numerous ways, and your targets can be killed in virtually limitless manners.

Combining the deft acrobatics of *Prince of Persia* (the same developer as this title), the historical setting (why hasn't anyone given us a game set during the crusades before?) and the dark themes of *Hitman*, has certainly gotten us excited and, as the title draws ever closer, we'll be bringing the good oil on what could be one of the top five games of 2007.

OPINION: Deadly, acrobatic assassination games set during historically violent periods make us very happy. Admittedly we have very little frame of reference, but still, we're watching this one really closely.



■ Good balance is crucial (but heavily padded underwear is a good failsafe)

SKATE

Get your skates on!

Offering a more realistic representation of skating, as opposed to the insanity of the *Tony Hawk's* series, *Skate* seems to be aimed at a more hardcore gaming audience. As of now we have seen more of the licensed skaters in the game than in-game footage itself, but the few screenshots and vids we have seen of this

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SKATING
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA BLACK BOX
RELEASE: WINTER 2007

game look rather tasty. *Skate* promises open-ended game environments and a gameplay dynamic that attempts to play and feel like actual skating. Maybe for the first time in our pathetic lives at least one of the OPS staff will manage to ollie above three inches... maybe...

OPINION: Perfect for hardcore skaters, and all you lazy buffoons who can't be bothered to learn.

FUN FACT: Rob Dyrdek and Christopher Boykin were recently caught doing their motion capture for *Skate* on their MTV show *Rob and Big*. Accident or shameless publicity stunt? You decide...



■ A good racing line in *MotorStorm* is one that doesn't leave your car in a smouldering heap

MOTORSTORM

The amazing race?

When it comes to speed-based thrills, the *Burnout* series is arguably the king of the road. However, *MotorStorm* is set to rule the kind of racing removed of tarmac, with

no-holds-barred hooning through jagged canyons and over lofty cliff tops in the American desert.

OPINION: The PS3's most addictive racer? Hands down.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RACING
DEVELOPER: EVOLUTION STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: MARCH



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: TACTICAL SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: RED STORM
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

Totally GRAWesome!

Tom Clancy fans will have no less than three PS3 launch titles to indulge their techno-military fantasies with, with *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* being arguably the most compelling of the lot. The sequel to last year's *GRAW*, a game that racked up numerous accolades worldwide, *GRAW2* improves upon the original by ramping up the environmental damage and enhancing the AI of both the enemy and your team mates. Move out!

OPINION: War like you've never seen it before!

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: NINJA THEORY
RELEASE: MID-2007

HEAVENLY SWORD

And a heavenly booty to match!

When you're an incredibly hot, redheaded chick named Nariko with an extremely volatile temper, brought on by the fact that your clan has been all but wiped out to the verge of extinction by some pissant invading King, there's not a whole hell of a lot you can do but dust off an ancient weapon of immense power, and introduce it to both the army poised to attack and its ruler. It is the God given right of any clan leader's daughter after all. Time to dispense some justice and retribution! There's just one problem. The same said sword that enables you to kick some righteous ass, also drains away your life force. It's a tale of revenge against the clock, as Nariko must avenge the wrongs

against her clan before her weapon of mass destruction snuffs out her life. Armed with the Heavenly Sword, Nariko is an avenging angel, with enough super smooth moves to put Jet Li to shame. It's *God of War* meets *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, with an unbelievable array of attacks, "wire-fu" martial arts without the wires, and a body count higher than a couple of World Wars combined.

OPINION: Expect a ridiculous amount of action, death and highly destructible environments as you cleave your way through half of creation. Slice and dice!

FUN FACT: Andy Serkis, known for his portrayal of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, not only plays the main bad guy in *Heavenly Sword*, but cast and directed all the motion capture scenes as well.



■ Is there any man in San Francisco who doesn't like to be whipped?

INDIANA JONES

The old-hatted fossil jumps to Sony's new system

The next generation, at least in part, belongs to LucasArts. Cue the upcoming but unnamed Indiana Jones game based on the film currently in production.

It's a third-person adventure game – no surprise there...What's genuinely next gen is the dynamic nature of the physics and character behaviour. One demo sequence had Indy riding atop a cable car down a

San Francisco street while mobs of thugs tried to jump over from cars to attack him. Some missed the jump completely, some had to pull themselves up – but it wasn't pre-programmed. Success or failure was down to how each enemy reacted to the unscripted variances of the moment – like real life. Next gen? You bet.

OPINION: Set to drag the evolution of games skywards.

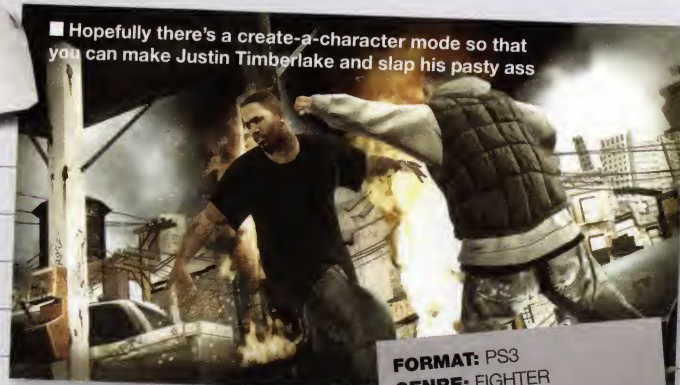
FUN FACT: The same dynamic physics and character behaviour are being used in another smashing LucasArts next gen title (hint: it rhymes with 'car doors').

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
RELEASE: LATE 2007



■ "Why can't you ladies ever take 'nice tits' as a compliment? OOF!"

■ Hopefully there's a create-a-character mode so that you can make Justin Timberlake and slap his pasty ass



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FIGHTER
DEVELOPER: EA CHICAGO
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: MARCH

DEF JAM: ICON

Hip-hop's greatest hits?

Developed from the ground up but borrowing elements from the powerful *Fight Night* engine, *Def Jam: Icon* is the first fighting game to ever incorporate music into its combo system – timing your beatings to the beats of the

soundtrack actually rewards you with extra damage from your attacks. Throw in some of hip-hop's finest including Ludacris and Outkast's Big Boi as playable pugilists and you've got a block party that packs a punch.

OPINION: Could be one of the most innovative brawlers in years.

HALF-LIFE 2

The thinking man's FPS?

Half-Life 2 is an absolute must-play experience – there's no argument. Nope, end of discussion. We're putting our foot down. Whether you missed out on the PC version or you played the hell out of it (and loved it), you're going to want a piece of the definitive PS3 edition, complete with hours of extra singleplayer gameplay and multiplayer modes such as *Portal*.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: VALVE
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: JUNE

OPINION: One of the FPS untouchables reborn on the world's most powerful console. 'Nuff said.





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THE DARKNESS

You might want to get a nightlight

Based on the cult comic book classic of the same name, *The Darkness* is a brooding FPS epic that swaps shotguns and sniper rifles for supernatural dual-wielded 'death eels' that can summon black holes to devour your enemies. Using the hefty capacity of the Blu-ray format, the developers have managed to squeeze in hours of video and even a full-length movie that can be watched on any of the televisions in-game.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: STARBREEZE
DISTRIBUTOR: TAKE 2
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

OPINION: Possibly one of the most brutally atmospheric games of the year.

LAIR

A breath of flaming fresh air?

Along with *Warhawk* and *Blazing Angels*, *Lair* is one of the first PS3 games to incorporate the SIXAXIS motion-sensing capabilities into its core control system. Tilting the controller allows you adjust the pitch, roll and yaw of your dragon in dramatic aerial battles, and you can even EAT enemy soldiers in order to replenish your health. Impeccably detailed visuals and support for 7.1 surround sound should ensure that *Lair* is an adventure as lavish as it is fun.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE
DEVELOPER: FACTOR 5
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: WINTER 2007

OPINION: Should give *Warhawk* a run for its money in the aerial combat stakes.



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

His final MG game, Kojima readies a masterpiece...

Boy, this'll have it all. The last instalment in the Solid Snake series, *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*, is shaping up to be a definer of its generation and purveyor of butttock immobilisation.

Set a couple of years or so after the events of *MGS2*, Solid Snake finds himself in a Middle Eastern war zone with native warriors shooting it out against mercenaries hired by Private Military Companies (PMC) and backed by a fleet of small agile Metal Gears. Seems "someone" has hired the grunts to hulk up a country just for soldiers called Outer Heaven.

Apart from the usual *Metal Gear* story schlock, there'll be plenty of pant-dampening changes to the gameplay.

OPINION: Will hit a rapturous crescendo, likely rocketing next gen games upwards like a Metal Gear missile.

Players will now be able to use psychological warfare to test the mental strength of opposing soldiers during combat and the camouflage system has been updated for the futuristic setting; now players will use their suit to blend in with their surroundings like a chameleon.

But get this: it appears as though Snake will age at an exponential rate throughout the game, like Mel Gibson from *Forever Young*. Or Paul Hogan. If this turns out to be true, expect time limits to play a major part in each mission this time.

Phew! And we can't believe we went through that entire piece without mentioning that the visuals are looking hotter than a lusty Jennifer Hawkins...

WARHAWK

"They're on me like flies on a cow patty!"

Dribble a helping of third-person ground combat featuring an arsenal of masonry-cracking boom boom, add a touch of vehicular tank and jeep lovin', then bring in the mains – massive aerial dog fighting action – and you've got *Warhawk's* recipe for war!

While the single-player campaign, with its mix of ground and air missions

looks undeniably slick, it's the 32 player multiplayer modes that are causing us to go incontinent. Imagine free-for-all battle arenas where players could shift from fighting on foot to jumping into a tank and then into an aerial dogfight in moments and you've got an idea of what *Warhawk* will be offering PS3 owners on release.

OPINION: Provided they can pull all the parts together, *Warhawk* will be worth selling your siblings for. And you can quote us on that.

■ "32 player multiplayer"? If only we had 31 friends! *sigh* Now we're just depressed...

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: INCOGNITO
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: LATE 2007



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
RELEASE: LATE 2007



FUN FACT: Multiplayer will also be back in full force in *MGS4*, with Kojima saying the online play in *MGS3: Subsistence* was merely a warm-up.

■ "Guys? Who left that window open? It's cold outside, I might get the sniffles or..." STAB!

PS3



RESIDENT EVIL 5

Best. Horror. Ever?

To be honest very little is known about this title. It was conspicuous in its absence from both E3 and the Tokyo Game Show in 2006. Is Capcom just toying with us like a cat bloodily pawing a mouse? Keeping the details a secret until the last minute, playing a cruel game of bait and switch? After all, these are the guys who told us *Resident Evil 4* wasn't coming out for the PS2 – and then: BAM! It did. So who knows?

What we can tell you is gleaned from various screenshots and trailers we've dug up (excuse the pun) and that is: It seems

to be set somewhere dusty and creepy. Somewhere in the deep south? The Middle East? Hard to say. What we can say is that based on the all-too-brief trailer we've seen is that this will easily be the best looking *Resident Evil* ever.

Hell, some of us at the mag are playing through *RE4* for the fourth or fifth time – really, it was a bloody amazing game – so if the tradition of Capcom amping up its survival horror stalwart continues – we're in for a real treat. With any luck Capcom will break its silence on the hotly anticipated title, and when it does you'll be reading about it here.

OPINION: As cool as the mutated villagers and the bloke with the bag on his head and the chainsaw were – we want zombies back with this entry. Also, if someone can use a chainsaw on you, you should be able to pick it up and use it on *them*. It's only fair!

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■ As if the Middle East didn't have enough problems – now it's got zombies in it!?



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SURVIVAL HORROR
DEVELOPER: EDEN STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
RELEASE: LATE 2007

ALONE IN THE DARK

The granddaddy of survival horror returns...

Set in and around New York City's sprawling Central Park, *Alone in the Dark* attempts to reinvent the survival horror genre it essentially created by splitting the action into 30-40 minute episodes of gameplay, each closing with a nail-biting cliffhanger and opening with a video summary of the previous episode. Future episodes are also planned to be available for download via the PlayStation Store.

OPINION: The serial nature of the storytelling should result in an addictive experience.



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: TEAM BOND
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
RELEASE: LATE 2007

LA NOIRE

The Getaway meets GTA?

LA Noire is the fruit of quite a formidable partnership – it's being developed by the minds behind *The Getaway* on PS2, and published by Rockstar Games, the creator of the all-conquering *Grand Theft Auto* series. Set in a meticulously recreated city of Los Angeles from the 1940s, *LA Noire* is a detective story packed with action, cinematic storytelling, Tommy guns and plenty of jazz.

OPINION: One of the most promising adventures of the year – and it's 100% Australian made!



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: TBC 2007

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Burn, baby, burn!

We gotta say, we really liked *Mercenaries*. Something about being a hired gun is always appealing. Then there was the fact that you could pretty much destroy anything you could see. We loved that. As you battle through war-torn Venezuela, *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* wants you to take that interactivity to the next

level with fire as your new toy. Burn down buildings, perforate petrol tankers and live out your favourite Arnie movie moment as you flick a match onto the gasoline seeping under the feet of your next unfortunate burn victim spouting "Remember when I said I would kill you last... I lied!" Totally freakin' awesome!

OPINION: This is the most fun us big kids can have in a sandbox world. Get us our copy now!

FUN FACT: You can beg, borrow, steal or blow the crap out of a huge range of both civilian and military vehicles.

BEST GAMES
OF 2007

PS3

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY
DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

JOHN WOO PRESENTS STRANGLEHOLD

More *Hard Boiled* Fat?

Chow Yun-Fat reprises his role of Inspector Tequila from John Woo's classic action film, *Hard Boiled*, in this epic action shooter packed with the trademark choreographed action and freeze frame moments the director is renowned for, within stunningly destructible environments. With two fists full of lead, Tequila must take down the organised crime bosses who took his family, by any means necessary.

OPINION: Should pack enough on-screen intensity to hard boil your eyeballs.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: TBC 2007

ARMY OF TWO

Buddy up and shoot stuff!

Army of Two's plot is pretty much all in the title – it's set in the near future, and sees you and a buddy (either played by an actual human, or intelligent AI for the friends-challenged) team up to blast the heck out of everyone and everything around you.

You and your cohort will drop in and complete missions, utilising each other as you go. When wounded your comrade will

help you and vice versa.

It's a neat idea and one that, with varied missions and AI that actually is intelligent, could add some much needed originality to the third-person shooter.

Plus it's nice to have the opportunity to make a third-person game more social – as it's a genre notorious for not being inclusive.

OPINION: The weapons in *Army of Two* are impressive, but what we like is the fact they can be customised to an insane degree. With sights, stock, ammo and more added on or taken away – these guns are going to be pimpin'. We can't wait.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

Sadly not a Dire Straits-AC/DC mash-up

Developed using the much-vaunted Unreal 3 engine, *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* promises to provide a compelling story, unrivalled authenticity and intense squad-based action, as you drop feet first into the largest airborne operation of World War II. Operation Market-Garden sees the 101st Airborne division fight to open 'Hell's Highway' in a daring bid for a quick end to the war.

OPINION: Potentially the most authentic WWII game ever made.

FINAL FANTASY XIII

We've got a feeling it isn't their "final" fantasy by a long shot!

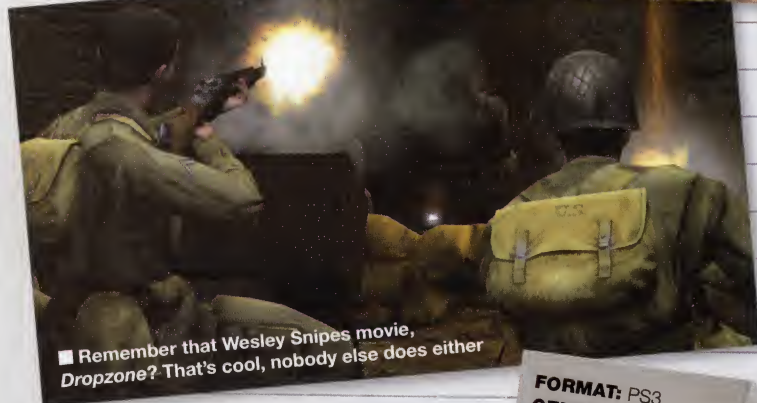
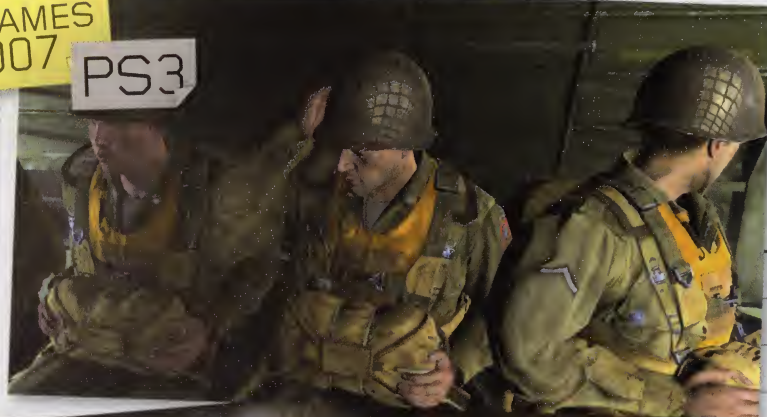
The *Final Fantasy* franchise is a lot like watching Jessica Alba and Adriana Lima engaging in a pseudo-lesbian, slow striptease for your eyes only – the longer it goes on, the better it gets, though the anticipation between sets is agonising, until you're left uncontrollably salivating like a dog in heat. Each instalment brings about a faster combat system, epic storylines, near seamless switches to battles on the fly and simply stunning CG cut-scenes. So why would *FFXIII* be any different? Those maestros at Square Enix are pointing to the bleachers, with bases loaded and calling out a home run,

and boy are they swinging with confidence. What we've seen so far shows a ridiculously beautifully rendered heroine battling a platoon of faceless goons, and dispatching them with ease. The Active Battle System is still utilised, but at greatly increased speeds, so it's taking the waiting out of turn based combat. She's wielding a massive sword-slash-gun-slash-whatever. Okay, we don't really know what the hell it is, but it's big, shiny and looks really, really cool. With *FFXII* pushing the limits of what the PS2 can do, we can't wait to see what the 40 odd times more powerful PS3 can accomplish with *Final Fantasy XIII*.

OPINION: We're getting a little tired of saying "best RPG of the year" for each new jewel in the *Final Fantasy* crown, but they're just too damn good! Someone else step up to the plate already!

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RPG
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
RELEASE: TBC 2007

PS3



Remember that Wesley Snipes movie, *Dropzone*? That's cool, nobody else does either

MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE

A heady mix of shooting and 'chuting

No, *Medal of Honor* has not become a flying game, EA is sticking with what it knows – realistic, first-person shooters set during WWII. There is, however, a big addition this time around. Not only do you get to play as infantry, but at the start of the level you strap on the 'chute of a paratrooper and float down to the

battlefield, getting a sense of what lies ahead and using that knowledge to get you through the warzone.

Using the power of PS3, and actual soldiers to advise, this could be the most historically accurate, and immersive, *MOH* game yet. We're strapped up and are ready to take the plunge!

OPINION: A new direction for the series is long overdue – here's hoping that EA can blow the *COD* franchise sky high.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: EA LA
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RACING
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
RELEASE: LATE 2007

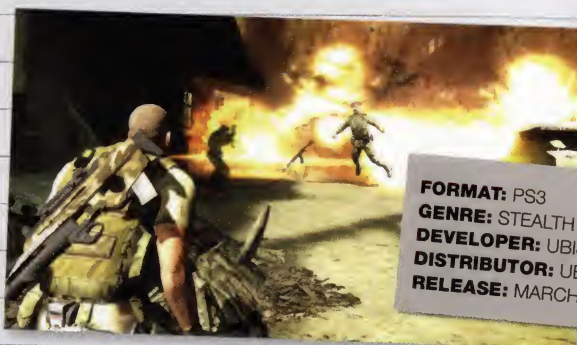


COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

The return of the rally king?

Once the darling of PSone racing fans, the *Colin McRae* series is back in a big way on PS3 – with 40 licensed rally cars, support for up to a whopping 100 players online and ultra realistic driver AI that mimics the behaviour of real world racers. Dynamic weather effects, track deformation and a particularly complex level of vehicle destruction should ensure that the franchise reclaims its right to the rally throne.

OPINION: Miss this, rally fans, and your name will be MUD.



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: STEALTH ACTION
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
RELEASE: MARCH

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT

Sleeping with the enemy...

Double Agent is undoubtedly the best Sam Fisher experience since the original stealth classic thanks to its moral decision-based narrative and suitably exotic locales. Although you may have already experienced it on the PS2 you'll likely want to pick it up for PS3 as well due to its immaculate visuals, motion-sensing controls and exclusive multiplayer maps and skins.

OPINION: The definitive version of arguably the most authentic spy game ever made.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

Aka 'Devil Will Get their asses whupped again'

Booyakasha! The *OPS* team has just witnessed footage that confirms *DMC4* is en route to mark your PS3 with demon-bopping, hellfire cleansing, bullet-tearing ghoul-foolery. The game is setting itself up to play faster and more insanely than ever, packing a visual roller-bollocking on every turn [What the hell are you talking about? – Ed].

Here's the latest: Dante is now the bad guy. Seems like all that power has gone to his bleached white roots and the lad has become dastardlier than a massive zit on your formal night.

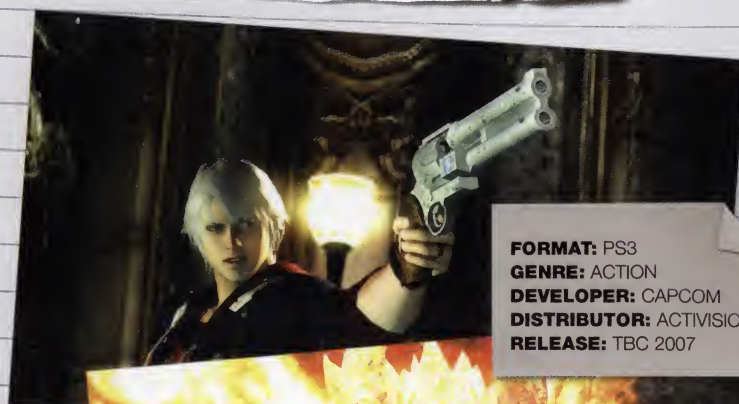
Cue Nero, a member of the Order of Knights who used to have Dante around for tea and strumpets before they started

getting medieval on each other. Sporting white hair and the expected motley collection of guns and swords, Nero plays a lot like Dante with the exception of his possessed arm, called the Devil Bringer. This allows Nero to reach out across the screen and grab one or several enemies, bring them up close for some combo juggling, then slam them into the earth below.

Even more impressive was the sneak peak we scored of a Balrog-inspired end of level boss. A massive flaming demon, this thing took on Nero amidst a small village of wooden houses, setting the whole place ablaze as the battle raged. Yeah, baby!

OPINION: Provided it doesn't suffer from the shortcomings of *DMC2*, this game can't lose.

FUN FACT: Despite Nero being the new character, the developers have hinted that players may be able to control Dante at some point.



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
RELEASE: TBC 2007



FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FIGHTER
DEVELOPER: SEGA/AM2
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
RELEASE: WINTER 2007

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■ "Um... yes we're serious. Nobody buttons their shirts up these days... um, or wears a bra... it's the fashion..."

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Never set foot in a TimeZone again...

You're either a Beatles person, or an Elvis person. Similarly, you're either a *Tekken* fan, or a *Virtua Fighter* fan. Or you're a complete pacifist, and prefer neither (wimp). Still, VF fans will have plenty to crow about with VF5 – it's got enough visual punch to send you down for the count, and it's got one of the deepest and most well-balanced fighting systems ever designed to prove it's about more than just good looks.

OPINION: Not for the casual, but a must for the hardcore fighting fan.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
RELEASE: TBC 2007



KANE AND LYNCH: DEAD MEN

A duo more deranged than Howard and Costello...

From the makers of the grisly *Hitman* series and the criminally underrated *Freedom Fighters*, *Kane and Lynch* focuses on the violent journey undertaken by two escaped convicts, one a flawed mercenary and the other a volatile psychopath. The contrasting personalities of the two characters affects how they react to given situations, with Kane remaining calm and Lynch a bit of a loose cannon, and like EA's *Army of Two* the entire game can also be played cooperatively with a second player.

OPINION: These two violent convicts are at the top of our most wanted list.

BEST OF THE REST

BURNOUT 5

DEVELOPER: CRITERION

DISTRIBUTOR: EA **RELEASE:** JUNE

Featuring an entirely open city where every intersection is a potential crash junction, *Burnout 5* promises to be a reinvention of the superb racing series.

GTAIV

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH

DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR **RELEASE:** OCTOBER

Online multiplayer? Multiple cities, states or even countries to explore? Absolutely amazing stuff you can't even imagine? You can bank on at least that last one when the most anticipated game of all time lands on 19 October 2007.

GRAN TURISMO 5

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

Judging by the *GTHD* demo, the series is well on track to once again set the standard for racing simulations. The catch? A 2008 release is looking likely. Bummer.

KILLZONE PS3

DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA GAMES

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

It's been MIA since its trailer blew the pants off all in attendance at E3 2005, but expect more to be revealed this year on one of the most talked about shooters in development.

THE SIMPSONS

DEVELOPER: EA

DISTRIBUTOR: EA **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

Likely to coincide with the movie set for release in July, *The Simpsons* is being developed closely with the creators of the long running series and should thus be littered with comedy gold. Woo-hoo!

UNTOLD LEGENDS: DARK KINGDOM

DEVELOPER: SOE

DISTRIBUTOR: EA **RELEASE:** MARCH

Arguably the best RPG series on the PSP comes to the PS3 with thousands of weapons, hordes of monsters and online play through multiple magical worlds.

SPIDER-MAN 3

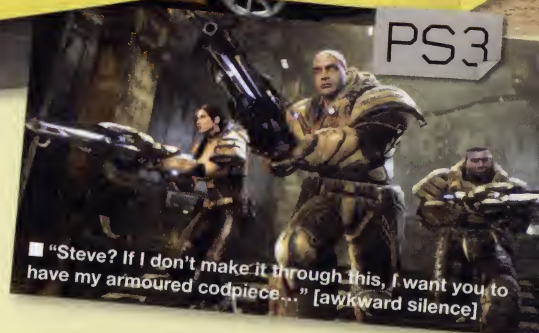
DEVELOPER: TBC

DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION **RELEASE:** MAY

Based on the upcoming blockbuster film, *Spider-Man 3* will allow gamers to face off against the villainous Venom and the powerful Sandman in a flawlessly recreated New York City.

BEST GAMES OF 2007

PS3



■ "Steve? If I don't make it through this, I want you to have my armoured codpiece..." [awkward silence]

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

DEVELOPER: EPIC GAMES

DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT **RELEASE:** WINTER 2007

One of the PC's most popular online FPS games makes its PS3 debut, packed with killer maps and modes, and a particularly beefy arsenal.

EYE OF JUDGMENT

DEVELOPER: SONY

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **RELEASE:** LATE 2007

A card game with a twist, *Eye of Judgement* utilises an HD EyeToy camera to bring your cards to life on-screen in furious turn-based battles.

SINGSTAR PS3

DEVELOPER: SONY

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **RELEASE:** LATE 2007

Hundreds of songs available for download and the ability to upload your performances to share with friends online? Sounds like the ultimate party game to us.

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

DEVELOPER: THQ AUSTRALIA

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ **RELEASE:** LATE 2007

Experience futuristic, intense fights in an open-world battlefield with more than 60 vehicles and advanced weaponry based on real world prototype technology.

THE WHEELMAN

DEVELOPER: MIDWAY

DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT **RELEASE:** LATE 2007

A joint videogame and film development starring Vin Diesel as an expert wheelman who comes out of retirement to protect a woman from his past.

ALSO ON THE WAY

TEKKEN 6
2 DAYS TO VEGAS
RATCHET & CLANK
STUNTMAN 2
TUROK
ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
STAR WARS
GUITAR HERO III
GETAWAY
NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA
EIGHT DAYS

HAZE

Welcome to the jungle...

Developed by Free Radical Design, creators of the deliriously fun *TimeSplitters* series, *Haze* looks set to be an uncharacteristically sober FPS by the company's previous standards. But bearing in mind that the majority of the Free Radical team had a huge hand in the creation of games such as *GoldenEye* and the original *Perfect Dark*, we can rest easy in the knowledge that this game is in safe hands. In short

this game looks set to be a pant filling, jaw dropping experience. Set in the jungle ala *Far Cry*, *Haze* sports some awesome AI, and despite being in its early stages, looks absolutely breathtaking. Add to this the moral dimension that Free Radical intends to implement (which apparently involves the killing of innocent civilians – woah!) and we can pretty much agree that the PS3 has a bit of a humdinger on its hands.

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: FREE RADICAL DESIGN
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
RELEASE: WINTER 2007

OPINION: These guys own the FPS genre like Heinz own baked beans – *Haze* could very well be classic.





■ "Oh, how embarrassing - I've got a boner" thought the skeleton

FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: SONY
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: APRIL

GOD OF WAR II

It is also the bare minimum of girls Kratos will bed at any one time

Of all the people in the world to shaft, we're thinking an ancient forsaken killing machine who conquered the reign of Ares to become the God of War isn't one of them. Of course those crazy Greek gods (rolls eyes) don't know whether to scratch their watches or wind their balls and go and do it anyway - cue a rather peeved Kratos in Sony's *God of War II*, the sequel to one of the best action games ever made for the PlayStation 2.

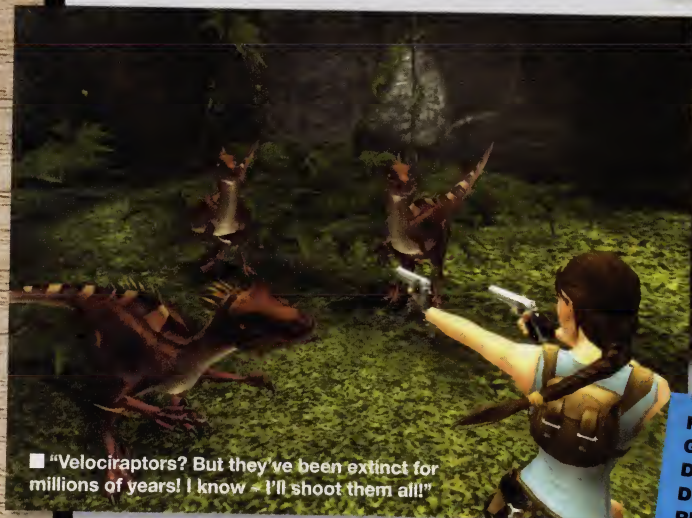
Positioning itself again as the coolest game, maybe EVER, you guide the hellish Kratos on a quest to find the Sisters of Fate. All the stuff from the first game is here: eye scratching design, a huge arsenal of "look

out" combos, and a smattering of juggernaut-type enemies to take out with bloody context-sensitive controls. You love it. We love it. It's all good.

And there's more nasty stuff Kratos can do. For one, he now has an ethereal bow and arrow he can whip out and use on ranged enemies, and the game is promising a few flight sequences with Kratos riding a Pegasus or, potentially, using a rumoured new item called the Wings of Icarus to allow the nutter to take to the air himself.

FUN FACT: Expect mythology faves like the Cyclops, Cerebrus, and skeleton warriors to turn up for some trouncing.

OPINION: Riveting new story, smarter foes, epic game design - this'll be another bloody red-letter moment.



■ "Velociraptors? But they've been extinct for millions of years! I know - I'll shoot them all!"



FORMAT: PS2, PSP
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
RELEASE: MARCH

LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

Three cheers for Lara. Hip-hip...

Lara Croft came back from the shameful *Angel of Darkness* fiasco with the pretty damn good *Tomb Raider: Legends*. So good was this new look at Lara, in fact, it's inspired creators to remake (or re-imagine - pick your euphemism) the first game.

Picture it - the first game - which was

arguably the best - made all pretty with new graphics, some more action oriented moments and a more modern feel. Whereas Hollywood remakes of classic films are usually doomed to craptacularity (it's a word) this could well work and introduce a whole new generation to Lara's erm... assets.

OPINION: An anniversary you really shouldn't forget.



FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: TACTICAL SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007



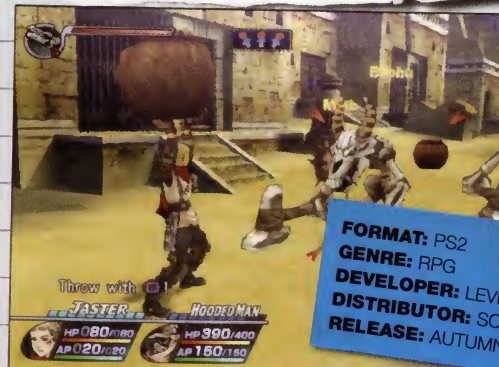
FUN FACT: This will be the first *SOCOM* game on the PS2 to feature online co-op against the CPU.

SOCOM COMBINED ASSAULT

Going out with a bang

In the past the *SOCOM* series has been a huge success for the PS2, essentially setting the bar for online play on the console. If you have hooked your PS2 to the internet, chances are you have played *SOCOM* online, and if you haven't then shame on you. A cross between an entirely new game and an expansion pack, *SOCOM Combined Assault* is really the final hurrah for the series on the PS2, and creators Zipper Interactive intend to go out with a bang. Essentially a completely new game featuring an all new story mode, *Combined Assault* could very well be the best *SOCOM* yet.

OPINION: Like an expansion pack, but so much more, this game will be a must for those who have taken their PS2 online.



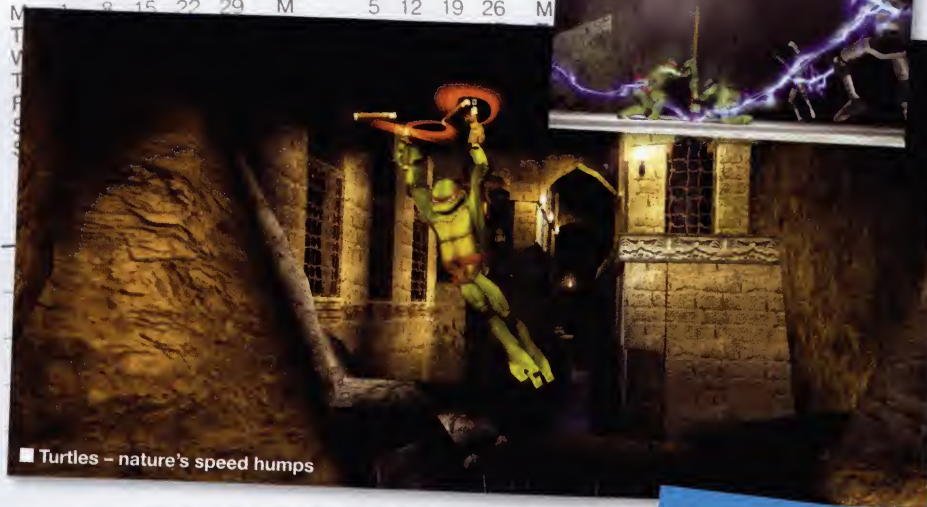
FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: RPG
DEVELOPER: LEVEL 5
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

ROGUE GALAXY

In a galaxy far, far aw- HEY! Come back here!

Droids, far-off planets and a quest that could save the universe. But it's not *Star Wars*. And George Lucas certainly shouldn't sue anyone. No, really. This action/RPG adventure looks quite interesting, if not exactly stunningly original. But hey, at least there's no Jar Jar Binks. We'd pay good money just for that!

OPINION: An epic RPG not to be missed.



■ Turtles – nature's speed humps

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Can this match the original coin-op?

Totally tubular! For this half-shelled update, Ubisoft wrestled the reigns off Konami and has currently devoted a massive development team to the task to ensure *TMNT* matures into the deep, shadowy,

acrobatic fighter its envisaged. Based on the upcoming CGI movie and highlighting the turtle's ninja nature, the game is steadying itself as both a merchandiser's dream and a sleeper hit.

OPINION: Forget everything you've played – this game could be the "cowabunga" bomb!

FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
RELEASE: MAY



BEST GAMES OF 2007

PS2

FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: FPS
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT QUEBEC
RELEASE: TBC 2007

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX CRITICAL HOUR

Got a little time to kill?

Rainbow Six is back, and it's kicking its old school baby! Get ready for a mix of fan favourite missions, and a whole slew of new ones. Gameplay goes slow-mo with a steadier pace, more tactics and a new combat system that takes into account positioning and movement when determining shot accuracy. Nice!

OPINION: Expect charged situations and intense skirmishes, so you'd better make sure you shoot to kill!



■ "What can you tell me about the hit and run, Detective?" "Well, we couldn't find the body – just the witch's hat" "You're an idiot, Detective" "Sorry, Chief"

FORMAT: PS2
GENRE: RACING
DEVELOPER: EA UK
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
RELEASE: APRIL

BURNOUT: DOMINATOR

We hear *Burnout* and we swoon!

Burnout is probably the most beloved car racing, smashing, current gen series of games. So when we heard there was another one popping out on the PS2, naturally we all danced the dance of joy. Details are a little thin on the ground, but we're guessing there'll be lots of gloriously detailed crashes, a genuine sense of speed and heaps of moments when you'll go "wheee!"

OPINION: Set to dominate our games sessions.

BEST OF THE REST

TRANSFORMERS

DEVELOPER: TBC

DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION **RELEASE:** JULY

Little has been revealed about this movie tie-in, but here's hoping it can build on Melbourne House's exceptional PS2 *Transformers* game from 2004.

JAMES BOND 007 [UNTITLED]

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH

DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

After being slowly ground into the dust at the hands of EA, the Bond franchise looks set to be revitalised by new publisher Activision and *Call of Duty 3* developer Treyarch.

DAWN OF MANA

DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX

DISTRIBUTOR: TBC **RELEASE:** LATE 2007

The first true sequel to the cult classic *Mana* series in more than a decade, *Dawn of Mana* takes the series from flat 2D to vibrant 3D while preserving the atmosphere and personality that the fans know and love.

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

DEVELOPER: EA

DISTRIBUTOR: EA **RELEASE:** JULY

The latest Potter adventure promises the ability to play as multiple characters, including Dumbledore, Sirius Black and Harry himself, and exploration in and around the Hogwarts Academy in Harry's most exciting and dangerous school year yet.

LOST

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

The addictive television series will make for an interesting videogame. Will it be episodic ala *Alone in the Dark* on PS3? Will there be playable flashbacks? Will anything actually happen? We'll have to wait and see.



TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

DEVELOPER: MELBOURNE HOUSE **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

RELEASE: MARCH

With 1500 square kilometres of Hawaii to cruise around in, cars from more than 30 auto manufacturers and support for thousands of players online, the racing possibilities really are unlimited.

MEDAL OF HONOR VANGUARD

DEVELOPER: EA **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

Vanguard finds you in the army boots of Frank Keegan, Corporal of the 82nd Airborne Division in WWII, and features the classic FPS gameplay that has made the series so successful.

SHREK THE THIRD

DEVELOPER: SHABA GAMES **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

RELEASE: MAY

Based on the third film in one of the most popular animated series' of all time, *Shrek the Third* allows players to take control of the grumpy green ogre in his latest adventure.



■ "Easy there, big fella - I'm just here to grab your nuts..."

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

What do you mean size matters...*cry*

The PSP has been on a bit of a roll recently with franchises such as *MGS*, *Tekken*, and *GTA* all gifting the portable with gaming goodness of vast proportions. Now it seems it is the turn of *Ratchet and Clank* to deliver yet another AAA title for the little guy with the upcoming *Size Matters* for the PSP.

Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters begins with the duo taking a bit of a holiday from hardcore platforming action, before being called into action after Ratchet and Clank groupie, Luna, goes and commits the cardinal videogaming sin: she gets kidnapped (good one, idiot). This older than tea storyline apparently develops into a tale of more engrossing proportions, but as of this moment we

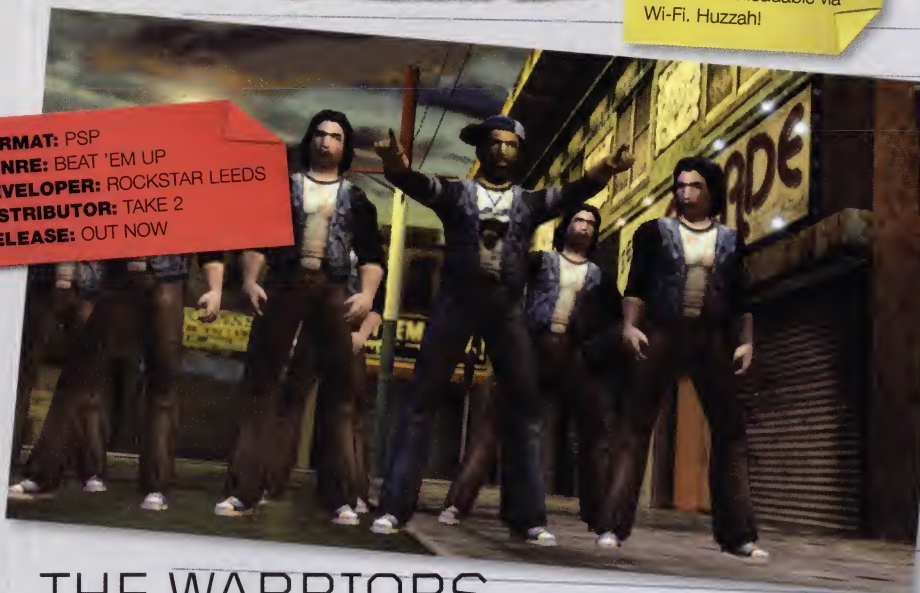
have few details as to what that story might be.

Developed by High Impact Games, a new company made up of several ex-Insonniac members, the game looks set to remain faithful to the insane gameplay seen in previous PS2 incarnations of the *Ratchet & Clank* series. It all looks pretty spectacular on the PSP, and the addition of weapons such as the 'Lacerator', the 'Bee Gun', and the 'Concussion Gun', in addition to some of the old favourites from previous franchises, will undoubtedly satisfy fans of the series. *Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters* looks set to be another great addition to the PSP catalogue when it is released in early 2007.

OPINION: The *Ratchet & Clank* series has never disappointed, and we expect no less from this. Looks set to be another great addition to the PSP library.

FUN FACT: High Impact games has promised that new multiplayer missions will be downloadable via Wi-Fi. Huzzah!

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: BEAT 'EM UP
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
DISTRIBUTOR: TAKE 2
RELEASE: OUT NOW



THE WARRIORS

Come out to plaaaaaaay... um, agaaaaaaain!

The Warriors was a seriously underrated brawler for the PS2 and if you haven't had a crack at it - you could probably pick it up quite cheaply.

Anyway, to the PSP version well... it's probably best that you just flick straight to our exclusive review on page 134 of this issue to check out our official verdict.

But you already know that it's going to rock given how good the PS2 game was (arguably one of the best movie games ever made and impressively faithful to the source material) and the fact that the PSP version is being handled by the team behind *GTA: Liberty City Stories* and *Vice City Stories*. Can you dig it?

OPINION: Rockstar owns the PSP, let's face it.

January 2007	6	13	20	27	M	4	11
February 2007	7	14	21	28	T	5	12
March 2007	8	15	22		W	6	13
	9	16	23		T	7	14
	10	17	24		F	1	8
	11	18	25		S	2	9
	12	19	26		S	3	10

March 2007	1	8	15	22	29	4	11
	2	9	16	23	30	5	12
	3	10	17	24	31	6	13

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: DEADLINE GAMES
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
RELEASE: MARCH



CHILI CON CARNAGE

Imagine Speedy Gonzalez on acid directed by Robert Rodriguez...

The south of the border insanity continues with the sequel to last year's underrated *Total Overdose* sneaking past the PS2 waypoint and calling the PSP its new home. The place is Los Toros. The mission? To avenge the death of your father by coming forth with great vengeance and furious anger... again... and again... and again! It's all about stringing together the most amount of kills, in the most outrageous, ludicrous fashion possible. We especially like the bonuses you get if you shoot a sombrero off an enemy, and in the process of catching it, blast him away in a spray of gunfire. It's a bit like cricket with automatic weapons... ok, it's nothing like that, but it sounds pretty damn cool!

OPINION: This is looking like the whole enchilada with extra jalapenos. Mmmm... spicy!

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: SPORTS
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL
RELEASE: MARCH

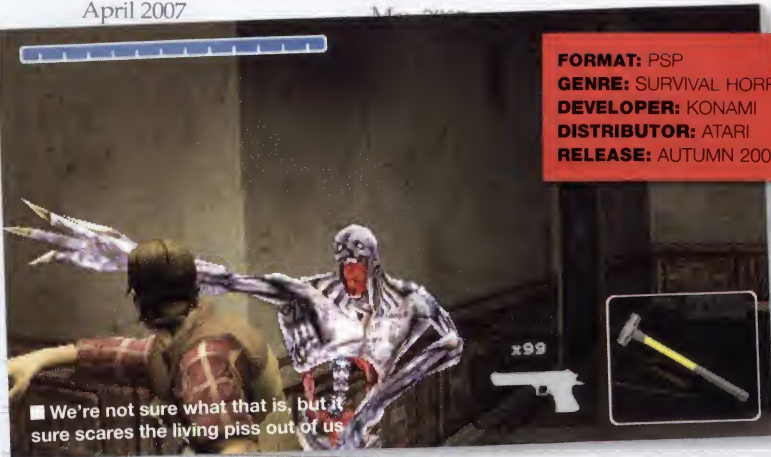


VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Keep those green hairy balls in your pocket

More mini games, a vastly improved World Tour mode, and new multiplayer options will ensure *Virtua Tennis 3* becomes the sports game to own on PSP this year. We would've liked to see Kournikova against Sharapova in a mini game featuring a bikini-eating mud bath and flails, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen...

OPINION: Even better than *VT World Tour*? Sega is set to serve up another ace!



FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: SURVIVAL HORROR
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

■ We're not sure what that is, but it sure scares the living piss out of us

SILENT HILL: ORIGINS

Oh man, we just got the stains out of our good pants!

Not much is known about the plot – other than there'll be some familiar locations and some new ones. The camera has been given a revamp for

the PSP so you'll be able to see the beasties as they come for you. Expect to be scared by this one as it seems to be going back to basics.

OPINION: They should bring Pyramid Head back. Come on? Dude rocks!



BEST GAMES OF 2007

PSP

■ "Hey Sarge! Can you give me a ride?"
 "Sure, just let me get your seat ready" [unzipping sound]

CALL OF DUTY: ROADS TO VICTORY

Death from above
 (or below as the case may be)

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: FPS
DEVELOPER: AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
RELEASE: AUTUMN 2007

The *Call of Duty* franchise finally comes to PSP with a bang! Spank the Krauts as a member of the Airborne infantry, Canadian rifleman or a kick arse British Paratrooper. Expect charged fire fights, head to head sniping battles and multiplayer carnage via Wi-Fi. Could you ask for more?

OPINION: COD on PSP should be FAB... seriously!

BEST OF THE REST



GRAN TURISMO 4 MOBILE

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

It's been promised for as long as the PSP has been in existence, and yet we still wait with baited breath for the alleged 'exact replica' of the PS2 game. Are we waiting in vain?

PAINKILLER: HELL WARS

DEVELOPER: PEOPLE CAN FLY
DISTRIBUTOR: QV SOFTWARE **RELEASE:** MARCH

Developed with the Havok 2.0 physics engine, *Painkiller* is a fast-paced FPS that lets you blast away swarms of nasties within a totally gothic setting.

TUROC

DEVELOPER: PROPAGANDA GAMES
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

Also headed to both PS2 and PS3, the long running dino franchise avoids extinction with a brand new FPS outing in 2007. Predator-infested prehistoric worlds and plenty of dinosaur hunting is the order of the day.

300: MARCH TO GLORY

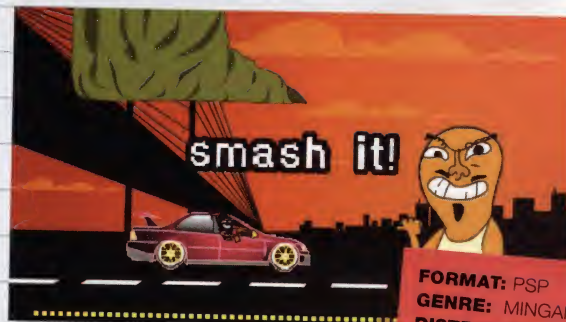
DEVELOPER: COLLISION STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: TBC **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

From *Sin City* creator Frank Miller, *300* looks like one of the most mind blowing films of 2007, and *March to Glory* is a game created exclusively for the PSP. Portable armies of Spartan warriors? Count us in.

CANNON FODDER

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI **RELEASE:** MARCH

A portable remake of a strategy classic from the 16-bit era, *Cannon Fodder* sees the player take charge of a platoon of battle-hardened soldiers across a huge range of on-foot and vehicle-based missions.



FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: MINGAMES
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: ZSLIDE
RELEASE: WINTER 2007

HOT PXL

Take it to 'da street'

Developed specifically for the PSP, *Hot PXL* is filled to the brim with inventive, insane mini-game madness. With over 200 short mini-games, each divided into specific and themes and chapters, Atari has dipped into street culture and its own rich videogaming past to create a slew of original, quirky gaming experiences.

OPINION: Quick bursts of gaming bliss.

HELLBOY

DEVELOPER: KROME STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI **RELEASE:** TBC 2007

Designed with extensive input from film director Guillermo Del Toro, *Hellboy* takes the player around the globe and through multiple periods of time, allowing them to kick ass in medieval Japan or trounce Nazi doomsday machines in 1940s Germany. Also coming to PS3.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TACTICS

DEVELOPER: KUJU ENTERTAINMENT
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI **RELEASE:** MARCH

Perfectly suited to gaming on the go, *D&D: Tactics* offers all the classic character classes, from bards to barbarians, and dungeon crawling support for up to six players in a series of gripping turn-based battles.

PLAYSTATION 3
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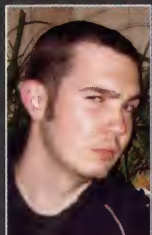


This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS



WELCOME

Here it is, the first issue of the totally revamped and renamed *Official PlayStation Magazine*, and with it the first batch of killer PS3 reviews. It's been a tough slog ploughing through as much PS3 as we can handle

but it's been worth it. Mind you don't miss the top notch PS2 and PSP titles like *Ghost Rider*, *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops* and *The Warriors* in all the excitement though...

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

PlayStation®
Official Magazine • Australia

GAME OF THE MONTH

WHY IT'S GAME OF THE MONTH?

1. Best weapons ever created. Period.
2. More action on-screen than you'll believe.
3. Did we mention 40-players online?
4. Top-notch two-player co-op.
5. Surprisingly original storyline.

"...the next generation of gaming has finally arrived."

Read why *Resistance: Fall of Man* is the PS3's first killer-app – page 84

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

PS3



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

EA's contender pounds its way onto PS3! – page 90



CALL OF DUTY 3

Resistance-killer or standard filler? – page 94

PS2



CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL. 2

A second helping of retro goodness – page 128



GHOST RIDER

Budget gaming at its best? – page 126

PSP



THE WARRIORS

Come out to play. Again – page 134



METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

There's a Snake in your pocket... – page 132

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** INSOMNIAC
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (2-40 ONLINE)
■ **PRICE:** TBC
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ftomps3.com

■ **BACK STORY:** *Resistance* marks the PS3 debut for Insomniac, the team behind *Spyro the Dragon* and *Ratchet & Clank*. Creating an FPS might seem like a departure but in reality it marks a return to its roots – its first ever game was *Disruptor*, an FPS for PSone.

■ "Let's kill this Earth scum and go get a taco"



■ "ARGH! We've got crabs!" "Shh! Don't tell everybody!"



■ "Mr Pinchy? Is that you AAAAAAGHH!"



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

PlayStation
**GOLD
AWARD**
10/10

The rise of a new FPS king?

The PSone enjoyed the likes of *Gran Turismo*, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Tomb Raider*. The PS2 was bolstered by the *GTA* series, *Resident Evil 4*, *Burnout 3* and *God of War*. And now the PS3 has *Resistance: Fall of Man*, a game so exceptional and one designed to capitalise so comprehensively on the considerable power offered by Sony's new machine that it really has no right to even exist until two or three years into the console's lifespan. And yet *Resistance* is already here, and it's anything but futile.

Have no doubts about it; if you're looking for one game to justify your PS3 purchase this March then you should settle for nothing less than Insomniac's bold and brash blast 'em up. And not because it offers next gen visuals and audio (though it totally does), but because it is exactly what a videogame should be; fun, pure and simple. An unprecedentedly huge online component, a singleplayer campaign with both a narrative to sink your teeth into (and enough rabid enemies keen to sink their teeth into you), a flawless control scheme and an arsenal of weaponry so ingenious it puts the rest of the entire genre to shame; these are the reasons that *Resistance* can't be missed. But let's start from the top.

IN THE BEGINNING

Resistance is set in an alternate reality of Earth in 1951. The good news is that in this reality, World War II never even happened – no pesky Nazis to worry about, no D-day, and the only infamous 'Battle of the Bulge' ever fought would be by the elastic in Elvis' jumpsuit a little over 20 years later. The bad news is that instead the planet has been overwhelmed by a parasitic species known as the Chimera, a mysterious threat that infects hapless humans and rapidly mutates them into fang-toothed nasties hell bent on further death and destruction. You play the role of US Army Ranger Nathan Hale, joining the fight alongside the British military all over the English countryside in an attempt to halt the Chimera from spreading further across the globe. The name 'Resistance' has a dual meaning; the most obvious is its reference to the human fight against the Chimeran invasion. But the second meaning becomes clear at the end of the game's first level, at which point Hale and a handful of his British comrades are overwhelmed by a swarm of insect-like Chimera. The Pommy soldiers drop dead on the spot, but rather than hurt him the attack only leaves Hale stronger. From then on, he's able to regenerate his health when he gets injured. Inexplicably, Hale's body has a resistance to the alien infection. But why?

■ "Call me four-eyes, huh? Apologise! Apologise or I will EAT your FACE!"

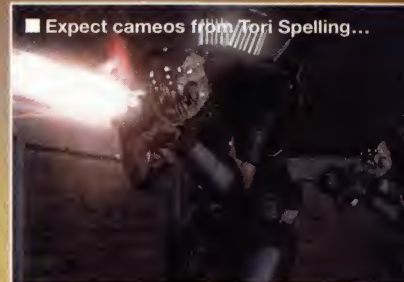




■ Deadlier than ALF



■ Uglier than Chewbacca



■ Expect cameos from Tori Spelling...



■ ...and Sarah Jessica Parker



■ There's only one real cure for ugly...

Uncovering the truth about Hale, and the origin of the Chimera, is what drives you through the singleplayer campaign of *Resistance*.

The controls have been mapped to the SIXAXIS perfectly, and the motion-sensing capability of the new controller is also used to compliment the main controls. In singleplayer you'll instinctively use it to fight off the biting attacks of the Menial Chimera nasties and deliver your rifle butt straight to their jaws, while in multiplayer you'll use it to shake off tracer darts or for patting out the flames when you're on fire. You also tilt the controller all the way to the left to bring up a map of the level, or all the way to the right to check the multiplayer stat screen. By no means has Insomniac used the new technology to say *Warhawk*-like levels of integration, but the subtle utilisation of the motion-sensing that is in there certainly adds to the immersion considerably.

ILLEGAL ALIENS

Those Chimera blokes are a nasty bunch. They hunt in packs and communicate in guttural growls, a bit like rugby league players but with better teeth. The breed of Chimera that is most plentiful is the Hybrid, those ones with the cooling tubes on their backs, six eyes and chilling grins. And if they're not ugly enough for you, they only get more beastly.

The Leapers and Rollers are scorpion-like creatures that erupt from pulsating cocoons and engulf you in groups from all sides. They generally surprise you when you least suspect it, and the shrill primal scream that heralds their arrival never fails to jolt the air right out of your lungs.

The Howlers are huge, dog-like monsters that often appear in pairs and their snarling, snapping jaws usually make a beeline straight for your neck meat. The Menials are unarmed, zombie-like Chimera that appear to be trapped in a physical state midway between their original human form and a fully mutated conversion, but their only method of attack is to moan eerily and creep up on you when you're not looking.

Then there are the Titans, huge beasts armed with fireball-spitting cannons that have a tendency of concussing you with the first blast and killing you with the second. There's also the tall, pencil-limbed Gray Jacks, the explosive blob-spewing spider-like Widowmakers and plenty more, so it's just as well you're handed good tools to combat them all with...

WEAPONS OF MASS SEDUCTION

Resistance has cool weapons. No, scratch that. *Resistance* has sexy weapons. Insomniac has proven its creative talents with all of the glorious guns and gadgets crammed into its *Ratchet & Clank* series

over the years, but for *Resistance* it has taken it up about 100 notches – elevating its arsenal to tower above that of any other FPS ever made.

Every firearm in the game has a primary and secondary fire option. The stock assault rifle either spits out automatic rounds or launches grenades, while the shotgun either delivers a single or double barrel blast. So far, so straightforward – but that's what you'd expect from human weapon engineering. Once you get your hands on some Chimera toys, things really start to get interesting. The Bullseye is an alien assault rifle, with a secondary fire that launches a tracer dart that latches onto an enemy and acts as a magnet for your bullets. From there you can blaze away around corners or over the top of enemy cover, with each and every shot you fire homing in on your target.

The Auger churns out blasts of flesh-searing energy powerful enough to pass right through walls, removing the advantage of enemy cover. Its secondary fire throws up an energy shield allowing you to create cover for yourself even when you're out in the clear, and the shield is impervious to enemy attacks – unless of course they're packing an Auger themselves.

The LAARK rocket launcher has effectively three modes of fire. Firstly, there's the standard rocket blast, handy for taking down large enemy bosses or just pumping

JOIN THE RESISTANCE

Online *Resistance* is where it's at, kids – lag free even with 40 players in the match and packed with smartly designed maps, trackable stats, rankings, clan creations and brilliantly designed match types. Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag all speak for themselves, but there's also Meltdown (in which you battle for control of set 'nodes' on the map), Breach (in which you have to carry a bomb to your opponent's base in order to destroy it) and Conversion (a 'last man standing' affair in which you begin as a human but get reborn as a Chimera after you're killed). Throw in all the tweaking options for rules, lives, weapons and so on, and you've got a comprehensive package that proves you don't need to have your credit card charged in order to have an amazing online experience.





SHOOT TO THRILL

There's a lot of fun to be had just firing the weapons in *Resistance*, and making the most of the secondary modes. Here are a couple of examples:

BULLSEYE



Tapping **LB** when you're using the Bullseye shoots out a glowing tracer dart, that latches onto the body of your enemy.



With a tracer dart lodged into the enemy, you can happily blaze away with **LB** in any direction, and your bullets will all home in on that poor sucker!

LAARK ROCKET LAUNCHER



After you fire a rocket with **LB**, you can press and hold **LB** to freeze it in midair.



With the rocket frozen, you can then use the right thumbstick to reassign a target for the rocket, while still being able to move around with the left thumbstick.



Releasing **LB** will send the rocket crashing down into the new target. Bombs away!



into the feet of a group of enemy grunts to send them cartwheeling in all directions. Secondly, you can hold **LB** to freeze a rocket in midair and alter its trajectory with the right thumbstick before sending it hurtling on its way down into the earth or swerving around a corner (see 'SHOOT TO THRILL'). Lastly, with a rocket frozen in midair you also have the option to set off a shower of mini-missiles that spray out from the rocket and rain down on any enemies below, before then reactivating the rocket itself to finish them off.

Even the grenades are a blast (in every sense of the word), with the awesome Hedgehog grenade that balloons out lethal spikes in all directions, or the air-fuel grenade that latches onto the ground or a nearby wall, releases a cloud of flammable gas into the atmosphere and then ignites everything and everyone trapped within it.

This is a mere taste of the weapon variety on offer. But the real beauty of the game's

amazing arsenal is that you are actually forced to exploit it fully in order to survive. You might be able to topple most other FPS games by relying on a mere machine gun and sniper rifle, but in *Resistance* you'll constantly be switching weapons on the fly depending on which enemy you come up against. Simple shotgun blasts are enough to demolish the herds of Leapers that rush at you from dark places, but the smarter enemies that try and seek cover will require you to make use of the Bullseye or Auger in order to get the better of them. The wall-hugging Slipskulls move so rapidly that you'll need to use the secondary fire of the Fareye sniper rifle to slow down time and get a bead on them, whereas when you find yourself overwhelmed by enemies of all types towards the end of the game, you might break out your Hailstorm cannon and press **LB** to activate an auto-turret to decimate anything that moves.

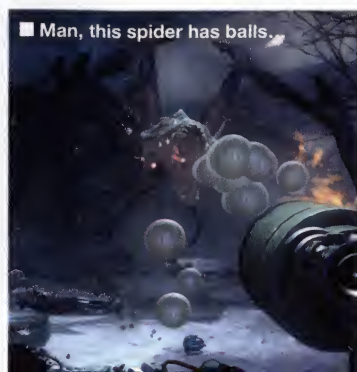
Essentially this keeps the experience fresh

from start to finish as the weaponry you're handed in *Resistance* encourages creative killing and the ample variety of enemies you face well and truly demands it. You really haven't experienced firefights this visually spectacular in any FPS you've played before, and more importantly – you likely haven't had this much fun while you're at it. And it only gets better...

TREADING SOFTLY

At several moments over the course of *Resistance*'s singleplayer campaign you'll find yourself happily jumping behind the wheel of a powerful tank, jeep or even a Chimeran Stalker (large, crab-like mechs) and speeding through lush green valleys or rumbling along the war-torn streets of London. The vehicle controls are every bit as tight, intuitive and well implemented as the on-foot setup.

The vehicles are especially fun in the game's co-op mode, allowing your buddy



■ Man, this spider has balls...



■ "Welcome to Earth" BLAM



F.E.A.R. IS COMING!



“...with *Resistance*, Sony and Insomniac have emphatically stamped their ownership over the genre... Rest assured that it was well worth the wait.”

to ride shotgun in the seat beside you or to man the machine guns in the tank while you drive and control the turret. Then again the co-op mode is just awesome, full stop – with double the number of enemies to kill and handy tactics like double-tagging enemies with a twin Bullseye attack. And really, has the addition of a co-op mode ever done anything other than make a bad game good and a good game *really* good?

That brings us to the adversarial multiplayer component of *Resistance*. Multiplayer is offered in both offline split-screen for four players and online for up to 40 players. That's right, 40 players online in a console FPS, and get used to it, PlayStation fans – the immense size and scale of the *Resistance* online experience is set to become the norm for the PS3 platform (and don't forget that the PS3 online service is absolutely free, right out of the box with your new console).

Multiplayer maps are scaled according to the number of players in a given match, ranging from claustrophobic arena-style battles for groups of four to huge, city-sized maps for groups of 40.

Some maps, such as the Bus Depot level, feature levitation pads that allow you to either vault up to higher areas in the environment or just hover in midair. Others feature streets strewn with broken down cars that are extremely effective fodder for 'collateral damage' kills, or wall-mounted gas pipes that you can shoot to ignite a burst of

flame into the path of an incoming enemy.

In multiplayer you have the option of controlling a human or a Chimeran Hybrid soldier, each with a balanced set of strengths and weaknesses. Humans can crouch behind cover, and more crucially, they are endowed with an on-screen radar to detect opposition in the terrain. Hybrids can activate a rage mode with a tap of **R**, allowing them to move faster, see through walls and double the damage of their attacks, but relying on this power for too long results in death from overheating.

Resistance is destined to dominate the online community of PS3 owners, but we're also happy that the developers included support for four players on the one machine. But regardless of whether you're going to be on the couch with mates or blasting strangers away on the interweb, you should brace yourself for many long nights ahead as multiplayer *Resistance* is an instant addiction.

CUTTING EDGE

Of course we can't bring you a review

of the flagship title for Sony's next gen system without mentioning the graphics, and while *Resistance* tops out at a resolution of 720p it is nonetheless an exceptionally good looking game, with an almost limitless draw distance and incredibly minute environmental detail. Some of the Chimeran architecture in the later stages of the game is so stunningly intricate it truly seems not of this earth, and the lighting techniques and particle effects used throughout the experience will leave your head spinning.

The physics are phenomenal, both in regards to the ragdolling of the enemies and the destruction of the environments. Enemies react accordingly to the body parts you shoot them in, and you only need to fire a few shots into some window glass to behold the environmental damage in effect – you can also gradually chip away at enemy cover as it fragments accurately in relation to the impact of your bullets.

The environments are both detailed and varied, as you blast your way through

gorgeous cathedrals, war ravaged suburbs, rolling hills, shadowy subway tunnels and more. Despite the scale and detail of the surroundings, the game never slows down, nor do the visuals take a hit when you play in split-screen multiplayer either. Even on a standard definition television *Resistance* still looks utterly amazing (having said that, an HDTV is strongly recommended).

Add all of this up and you get an epic game that truly lives up to and in many ways exceeds the huge expectations placed upon it. Not only is *Resistance* absolutely incredible as an offline experience, but it's also set to proudly wave the flag for the PS3's online capabilities for many years to come. Neither the PSone nor the PS2 consoles were ever regarded as the FPS connoisseur's platforms of choice, but with *Resistance*, Sony and Insomniac have emphatically stamped their ownership over the genre, by combining to create arguably the greatest console FPS ever produced, and an exciting new property that's destined to enjoy numerous blockbuster sequels in the years ahead. Oh yes, PlayStation fans – thanks to *Resistance*'s graphical grunt, standard-setting online experience and overwhelming emphasis on fun, the next generation of gaming has finally arrived. Rest assured that it was well worth the wait. **— Tristan Ogilvie**

PROS:

- The best weapons around
- Unprecedented 40-player online

CONS:

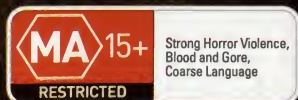
- You don't own a PS3
- You're allergic to fun

VERDICT: The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
10



whatisfear.com



PLAYSTATION 3



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"ITS SUPERB AI ALONE SHOULD BE WORTH THE PRICE OF ADMISSION"

— OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE — AUSTRALIA

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

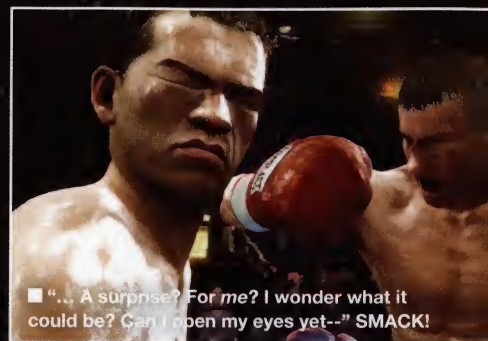
■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.easports.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The next gen incarnation of the *Fight Night* franchise was first revealed at the Sony press conference back at E3 2005. The technical demonstration captured the real drama of boxing. Does the finished game live up to quality of the early demo?



■ "... And I say Pepsi is better!" CRACK!



■ "... A surprise? For me? I wonder what it could be? Can I open my eyes yet--" SMACK!

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Lace up and throw down!

PlayStation
Official Magazine Australia

**BRONZE
AWARD**
8/10

Whether we openly admit it or not, deep down we all share an affinity with the sport of boxing. That's because at certain points in our lives, even if only for the briefest moment right before common sense kicks in, we've all wanted to violently punch someone in the face. Like the idiot in the red Mazda who cut you off on the way to work this morning. Or the obnoxious drunk at the cricket who showered you with beer. Or Eddie McGuire (he's just so smug). The list goes on...

Which is precisely why the *Fight Night* franchise is so satisfying – it lets

you beat the hell out of a variety of virtual pugilists without fear of any real retribution or consequence. Hard days at the office or the painful memory of coming home early from your snow trip to find your best mate banging your girlfriend in positions you didn't even know were possible are quickly forgotten with a few jabs, hooks and meaty uppercuts planted squarely on the jaw of the poor sap in the opposing corner (whom you can actually design to look like said ex-best mate thanks to the brilliant create-a-character function). It certainly beats the hell out of chewing down some aspirin and squeezing a novelty stress ball.

SO PRETTY

We can confidently say that *Fight Night Round 3* for PS3 features visuals that are so good they actually have a measurable impact on the gameplay. While not quite reaching the level of the impressive tech demo from E3 2005, *Round 3* still manages to capture a lot of the drama of the sport of boxing via the real time deformation of the combatants' faces. The screen is entirely removed of health and stamina bars – there's no HUD whatsoever – and instead you can accurately gauge the status of your opponent purely by looking at them; their swollen eyes, their bloodied noses, and their hunched, exhausted postures. You also

receive hints on the current standing of the match from the excited announcements of the commentators.

The high resolution boxers look absolutely superb – smoothly animated and coated in the most realistic videogame sweat EVER – but naturally your opponent looks even better face down and humiliated on the canvas. Undoubtedly the knockout punches are the real stars of *Round 3* – land one successfully and you're treated to a close up of your opponent's head severely jolting backward in slow-motion, shockwaves rippling along their face, with the sickening sound of bone fragmenting throughout their



KING OF THE WORLD

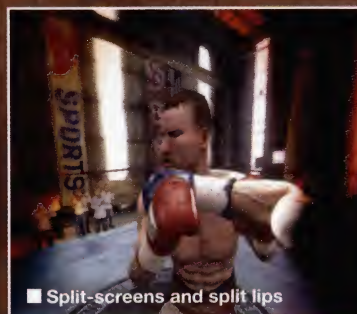
Aussie gamers missed out on the online *Fight Night* experience with the PS2 version of *Round 3*, but happily the PS3 version comes with online built-in – and we're happy to report that it's painless to connect to and find a game, and completely lag free. Unlike last generation EA games that required you to set up separate EA online accounts, *Round 3* requires you merely to connect with your PlayStation account and then jump straight into a fight. Ranked and unranked matches, leaderboards, stats and voice chat are all supported, and there are already plenty of North Americans to smack around over the interweb.



■ "C'mon, hit me! Just try it! I dare y--" WHACK!



■ "I'll give you a belt!" BIFF!



■ Split-screens and split lips

skull and jets of crimson spurting out of freshly opened wounds. The impact is so brutal that, like performing oral sex with a mouthful of thumbtacks, you'll wince whether you're the giver or the receiver – but regardless you'll likely be hitting ⊙ repeatedly to view the crushing death blow from every possible camera angle.

You probably won't really notice after the bell sounds as you'll be entirely focussed on the imaginary bulls-eye painted on your opponent's jaw, but it's also worth mentioning that the boxing arenas in *Round 3* look fantastic with some of the real world locations such as Madison Square Garden and the Staples Center recreating the

actual venues with impressively meticulous detail. Additionally, the ring girls are suitably buxom and jiggy, and their shiny bikinis are dazzling enough to leave you momentarily punch drunk.

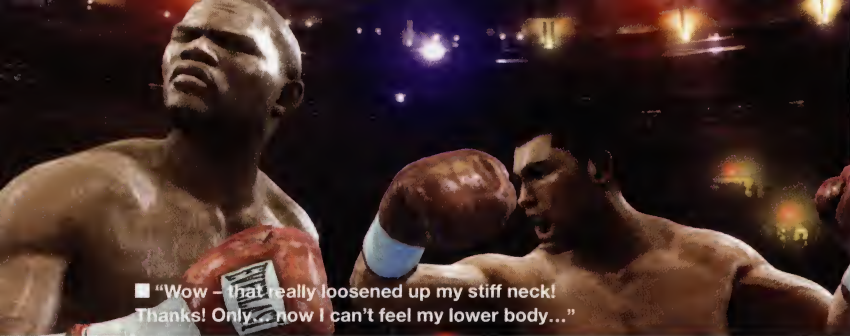
MAKING HAY

We already covered the core gameplay improvements to the *Fight Night* experience served up by *Round 3* when we reviewed the PS2 iteration last year, but just to recap – *Round 3* features a number of additions and enhancements over the previous game; some good and some a bit half-baked. Firstly, fights are far more balanced than they were in *Round 2*. In the previous game

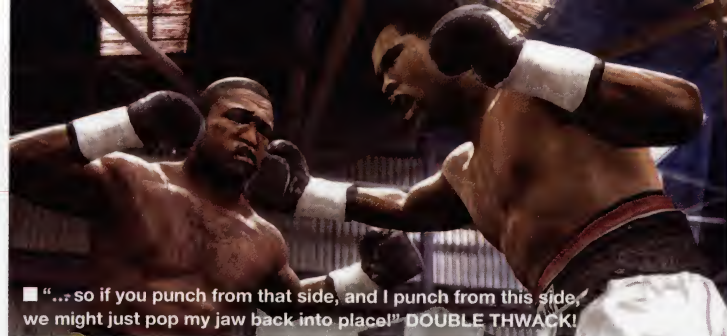
it was possible to charge up a haymaker and follow your opponent around the ring, absorbing hits all the while like the Terminator but still eventually unleashing the powerful blow with little or no risk. Not anymore. Haymakers are now slower, meaning they're telegraphed more obviously to your opponent, and can thus be countered more easily. Which is not to say that the haymakers aren't useful – they're more powerful than ever if you manage to land one – it's just that the risk versus reward has been balanced more evenly.

EA has also introduced two new special punches into your armoury, the stun punch and the flash KO. Both take even

longer to wind up than the haymaker, but also have the capacity to reverse the momentum of a fight in a single punch. The stun punch switches the camera to a first person perspective looking through your opponent's eyes, disorientating them and giving you the opportunity to unleash the fury. The flash KO drains your opponent's health in an instant, leaving them one solid blow away from ten weeks on a strictly liquids-only diet. Again, as with the haymakers, the new punches are effective additions to the gameplay because the both add significantly to the drama and are balanced effectively.



■ "Wow - that really loosened up my stiff neck! Thanks! Only... now I can't feel my lower body..."

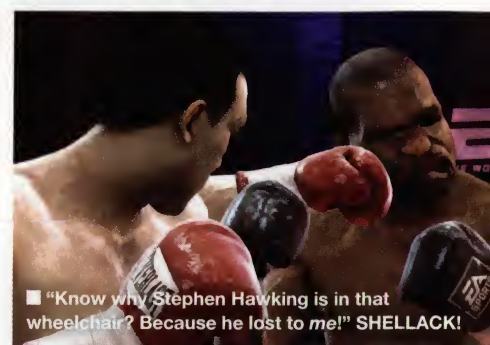


■ "...so if you punch from that side, and I punch from this side, we might just pop my jaw back into place!" DOUBLE THWACK!

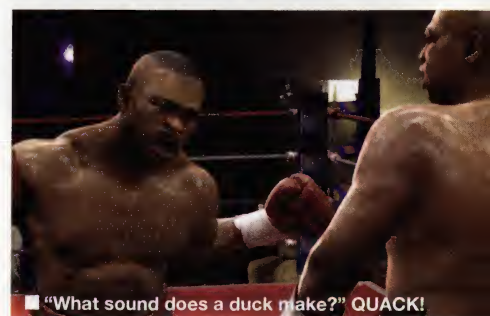


INFO BYTE

Round 3 doesn't support the motion-sensing capabilities of the SIXAXIS. Theoretically it could be used for bobbing and weaving, or perhaps to recover from a knockdown. *Round 4*, maybe?



■ "Know why Stephen Hawking is in that wheelchair? Because he lost to me!" SHELLACK!



■ "What sound does a duck make?" QUACK!

So in terms of the boxing itself, particularly against a mate beside you on the couch or online, *Round 3* is the undisputed heavyweight champ of the genre (despite the fact its only real competition comes from its last gen predecessors). An aspect that unfortunately does leave a little to be desired is the singleplayer career mode, simply because even on the hardest difficulty setting the AI of the computer opponents is too weak and predictable to pose much of a challenge. The new rival system which is meant to organically create a nemesis for you amongst the boxing ranks is ultimately underdone and inconsequential, and your only real incentive for playing through an entire career is to unlock the various arenas and boxing accessories. In this sense, nothing has changed from the PS2 version.

TOE TO TOE

The PS3 version of *Round 3* does come with a couple of exclusive features to knock the teeth out of its counterparts on rival consoles. Get in the Ring mode is played entirely from a first-person perspective, in split-screen if you're playing with a friend. Playing from this viewpoint both highlights the importance of an effective use of the jab punch in both an offensive and defensive sense, and it also makes it harder to judge where your opponent's next punch is coming from, particularly when you've got your gloves up guarding your chops. It's also easy to panic in this mode, as damage to your boxer creates a swell of red around the edge of your field of vision, and repeated blows to your noggin can create blind spots that play to your opponent's advantage.

Ultimately we found ourselves most comfortable playing the game with the traditional side-on perspective, but the Get in the Ring mode is still a welcome addition and should provide a change of pace and a stiff challenge for even cauliflower-eared *Fight Night* veterans.

The second feature exclusive to the PS3 version of *Round 3* is the integration of ESPN Silver. Provided your PS3 is connected to the PlayStation Network,

you follow predominately North American sports (don't expect to find the latest AFL or cricket scores, for example).

But now for the big question: given that you probably bought the PS2 version of *Round 3* almost exactly a year ago now, is there really a need to upgrade? Absolutely - the Get in the Ring mode and pleasantly smooth online experience are both nice additions indeed, but it's the incredible realism of the graphics

"Round 3 features visuals that are so good they actually have a measurable impact on the gameplay"

you've got the option of activating a news ticker that runs along the bottom of menu screens showing the latest news and scores from real world sports such as baseball and American football, and you can also view or listen to streamed video and radio highlights and news reports. It's certainly long overdue that EA should make use of the ESPN license it's been sitting on since it paid top dollar for it a few years ago, and it is a nice feature in theory, but ESPN Silver will only be an asset to you if

engine that will send your heart rate and primal blood lust to dizzying new peaks, and makes the acquisition of *Fight Night* for PS3 a no-brainer of Mike Tyson proportions. *Round 3* is every bit as visceral, skilful and exhilarating as the real thing, only no one's getting brain damage or a ruptured kidney as a result. It's a must for series fans, and if you're still yet to set foot inside the *Fight Night* ring then there's never been a better time to lace up the gloves. **Tristan Ogilvie**

PROS:

- It's the best boxing game ever
- Never gets old in two-player

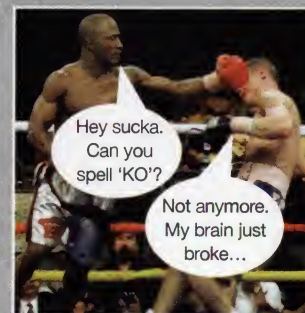
CONS:

- Singleplayer is a bit weak
- Blood makes you woozy

VERDICT: Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

BOXING: SAFER THAN SCUBA?

A North American study conducted in 1984 determined that the oft criticised sport of boxing was merely the 8th most dangerous sport in the US, in terms of fatalities. Horse racing topped the list, while the likes of scuba diving, mountaineering and college football all came in ahead of the violent sport known to fans as the "sweet science". Of course, while it might not necessarily kill you, boxing will most likely damage you irreparably, with a separate study revealing that 3 out of 4 boxers who participate in 20 or more professional fights suffer significant deterioration of the brain. OPS recommends playing *Fight Night Round 3* or jelly wrestling as healthy alternatives.



Hey sucka. Can you spell 'KO'?

Not anymore. My brain just broke...

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08



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MAY APPEAR MORE REAL THAN THEY ARE.



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PLAYSTATION 3

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■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
 ■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-24
 ■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
 ■ **WEB:** www.callofduty.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The *Call of Duty* series first hit the PC in 2003, replacing *Medal of Honor* as the new WWII shooter king. Infinity Ward has handled the PC titles, but *Spider-Man* developer Treyarch was behind *CoD2: Big Red One* and *CoD3* for PS2 and PS3.

CALL OF DUTY 3

Has Treyarch gone above and beyond?

“A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week.” General George S. Patton said that.

Patton's quote seems to sum up the motivation behind *Call of Duty 3* in a nutshell – the idea that it's better to release a good game now than a perfect game later.

At first glance, *Call of Duty 3* looks amazing and intense. It looks like exactly what you've come to expect from a series that put its boot into *Medal of Honor* and has gone about stamping its authority all over the WWII shooter genre ever since.

You're thrown into what has been dubbed by some as the bloodiest battle of the war, sometime after D-Day. Bullets sear past your ears, artillery shells slam into the turf, tanks roll by, cannons thumping. It's epic. It's daunting. The atmosphere is thick with desperation. But it never hits that peak again. The opening level is the best part of the game.



■ “I think my sight is crooked” “Really? Looks straight to me” “No, I mean my eyesight...”

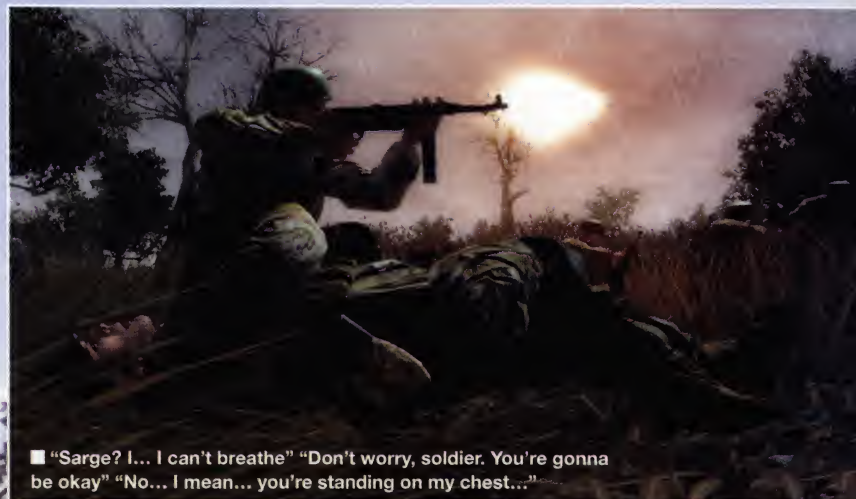
Unfortunately, *Call of Duty 3* doesn't live up to its pedigree. It's not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination, but it had the potential to be so much better.

WAR STORIES

The story follows four allied soldiers and their roles in the Normandy Breakout – a series of clashes following the Normandy invasion on June 6, 1944 that led to the liberation of occupied Paris. Fighting as a US army grunt, a British commando, a Canadian mechanised soldier and a Polish tank commander you'll jump between a variety of different missions. One moment you'll be clearing houses amidst a raging battle, another you'll be sneaking around behind enemy lines in the dead of night and another you'll be trundling



■ "Gee, didn't they have any *ridiculously* big guns at the armoury?"



■ "Sarge? I... I can't breathe" "Don't worry, soldier. You're gonna be okay" "No... I mean... you're standing on my chest..."



INFO BYTE

CoD3's multiplayer modes support up to 24 players online. There are a number of soldier classes on offer and a garage full of authentic vehicles including tanks and motorcycle/side-car combos.



■ "Seeing you all gathered there on your knees in front of me? Why, it takes me back to orientation day at boot camp..."



through the French countryside in a Sherman tank. *Call of Duty 3* often feels a bit disconnected as a result, but the decent variety of missions is pleasing.

The game's colour palette is a little washed-out, although much of that can be attributed to the setting. The visuals themselves are quite impressive, although somewhat inconsistent. Soldiers and vehicles boast a high level of detail but the environments often fail to convince. One area where we don't have any complaints is the sound department. As ever, *Call of Duty 3* delivers crunching explosions and teeth-rattling gunfire to a sweeping score and does it better than most.

NO QUARTER

Treyarch has also shoehorned a handful of unchallenging minigames into *Call of Duty 3*, all of which would have been quite expendable seeing as though none of them really improve the game. The much-publicised close quarters combat sequences we were all suckered into salivating over are the worst offenders once you realise how horribly scripted they are. Ideally, at any time in the game if a Jerry got close enough to jump you they would, triggering a close quarters combat sequence in the process. That would mean in any room and around any corner a German could be lurking, waiting to pounce on you. However, it's



not the case. In fact, they only happen half-a-dozen times over the game's 12 or so hour running time, and it's always the same soldier, in the same place, at the same time. Making use of the SIXAXIS' motion-sensing abilities you'll need to waggle the pad to shake Fritz off and hammer the button you're instructed to to finish him off. The motion-sensing is utilised in a few other ways during the game, from planting explosives to rowing a boat, but the only really useful implementation is for melee attacks. If you spot a stormtrooper within striking distance you can thrust the pad towards the screen to lash out and introduce the butt of your rifle to their fascist face. It's

the simplest use of the pad's motion-sensing abilities but it's definitely the best – it's criminal that other PS3 FPS titles don't support this.

WHITE FLAG

The biggest problem is that for every great effect there's an ugly disappointment. The smoke effects, for instance, are second to none. However the previously touted ability rake a cloud of smoke with bullets and marvel at the spiralling wisps they left behind is nowhere to be seen. This little effect is hardly a make-or-break omission, but it's illustrative of a bigger trend towards corner cutting. Again, there seems to be a real disparity between the quality of visuals in some departments compared to others. At one point you'll be marvelling at the glistening mud caked up on your squadmates' fatigues but at another you'll be staring at an appallingly textured wall. Your appreciation of the cool depth of field blur that occurs when you aim down the sights of your weapon and focus on a particular object may be short-lived when you see the elbow of the enemy you're aiming at clipping through closed doors and muzzle flashes visible through solid cover. The heat haze that drifts above tank cannons, heavy machine-gun barrels and jeep exhausts is a nifty touch, but then you'll notice a floating dead body or a hovering piece

“...there’s a good game to be found here, but it just doesn’t have the same magic the series has been lauded for in the past.”

of flung debris. Then there are the stilted animation transitions that have barely changed since the first *Call of Duty* hit the PC in 2003, and admittedly rare occasions where allied soldiers simply disappear before your eyes. The enemy AI is a real mixed bag too. We were happy to find that enemy squads would often fall back to better positions under withering fire as their teammates were picked off, but there are still plenty of occasions where a virtually endless stream of Krauts poured out from behind cover with zero regard for their own longevity and apparently oblivious to the ever-growing pile of dead nazis you’re got your Thompson trained on a few goosestepped away. Sure we’re all used to small nuances like this (and there have been plenty of videogames plagued with them in the past) but gamers can be a fickle bunch. Bugs like this can really piss on your suspension of disbelief and kill the moment. The next generation of gaming is about more than eye-melting graphics – stunning visuals are little without watertight gameplay to back them up.

This is especially of concern because as decent as *Call of Duty 3* is, it just isn’t as engaging as any of its forebears. The bulk of WWII’s most famous, most epic, and unfortunately, most interesting battles, have already been covered during the span of the *Call of Duty* franchise. Stalingrad, the Bulge, North Africa, Normandy, Kursk, Berlin – they’re all done and dusted. As a result, Treyarch has had to thumb through the history books and dig up something fresh. However, as important an historical footnote as the Normandy Breakout was, nothing in *Call of Duty 3* measures up to the kinds of battles PC pundits have been diving into for years in the earlier instalments of the venerable series. There’s just nothing as staggering in scope as crawling up a hill after disembarking on the shore of Stalingrad with a clip in your hand desperately trying to spot a fallen comrade with a rifle you can take. There’s nothing to match hitting the beach at Point Du Hoc on D-Day and scaling the cliff, or holding Pegasus Bridge against a concerted counterattack from German troops and armour, or rumbling through the streets

of Berlin in a T-34 and rolling up the steps of the Reichstag. Aside from the opening level, nothing in *Call of Duty 3* has the same sense of grandeur. Clear that building. Bow up these 88s. Rendezvous here. For want of a better word, *Call of Duty 3* is a little dull.

Worse still you can’t even bring in a few mates to spice things up a bit because the expected split-screen support for up to four players is nowhere to be seen, which is a major blow. The only multiplayer mode *Call of Duty 3* boasts is online, something that has the potential to be quite good (although we’ll need to reserve our judgement until its release). *Call of Duty 3* doesn’t support as many players as *Resistance*, but unlike the PS3’s premiere shooter, *Call of Duty 3*

does support vehicles – one of the very few black marks on the otherwise impeccable *Resistance*’s rap sheet.

KIA

Treyarch did a great job with *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One* and *Call of Duty 3* for PS2 was one of the more impressive shooters on the console. However, *Call of Duty 3* for PS3 feels a bit flat. Sure it’s competent and solid, but overall it’s nowhere near as grand an experience as we were anticipating. If you’re keen to go toe-to-toe with the Third Reich without waiting for *Brothers In Arms Hell’s Highway* or *Medal of Honor Airborne*, *Call of Duty 3* is well worth checking out. Despite its faults there’s a good game to be found here, but it just doesn’t have the same magic the series has been lauded for in the past. There aren’t any of the breathtaking set pieces or slick and useful new gameplay tweaks it needed to really shine among the new wave of first-person shooters like *Resistance* or the upcoming *Rainbow Six Vegas*. A new-age makeover can hide the wrinkles but it still can’t cure old age. **— Luke Reilly**

PROS:

- Capping nazis never gets old
- *Resistance*’s aliens turn you off

CONS:

- A few too many bugs
- Doesn’t match the old COD titles

VERDICT: *Call of Duty 3* is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

07



■ “Uh, Johnson? You can stop shooting him – he’s already dead! Christ, he’s in a freaking grave!”

■ “Bullets don’t seem to be working, men. Commence personal attacks! Uh... Hey, tank? You totally look fat in those treads...”

WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Entertainment, that’s what. Sure, war’s depressing as all hell but it makes for some great films. Here’s three of the best.



WHERE EAGLES DARE

Allied spies infiltrate an impenetrable nazi castle to uncover a list of German spies working in England. Just ignore the bit where they use a helicopter that wasn’t really invented yet.



KELLY’S HEROES

Clint Eastwood, Donald Sutherland and Telly Savalas team up and head behind enemy lines to rob a bank and steal a truckload of gold. It’s like *Ocean’s Eleven* with tanks. Everything’s cooler with tanks.



THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

Michael Caine, the most British man in Britain, plays a German who drops into the English countryside to snuff out Winston Churchill on his holiday. Based on true events. Actually, it didn’t happen (or did it?).

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■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (2-14 ONLINE)
■ **PRICE:** TBC
■ **RESOLUTION:** 1080p
■ **WEB:** www.namco.com

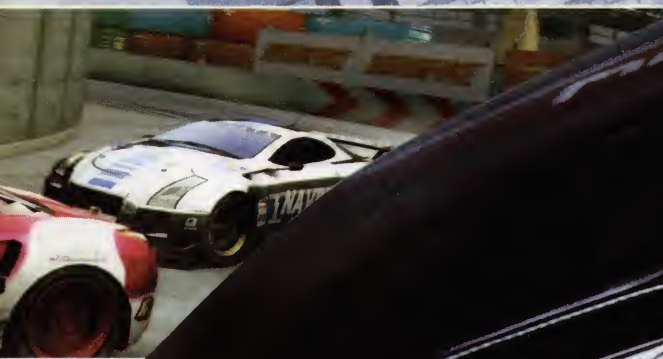
■ **BACK STORY:** *Ridge Racer* began life as an arcade game in the early nineties. Interestingly it was also the first arcade game to incorporate a working clutch. The game was ported to PSone where it gathered a lot of attention because it was THE launch game to own.



■ Painting headlights on the back of your car confuses the hell out of the other guys



■ "Why are we all just parked here?"
"So they can take a nice screenshot. Jeez, rookie"



RIDGE RACER 7

Namco's still got plenty of gas in the tank

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD
9/10

Like a pub without beer or a meat pie without tomato sauce, it just wouldn't seem right to unwrap a fresh new PlayStation console without having a copy of *Ridge Racer* to go with it. PlayStation and *Ridge Racer* have enjoyed the sort of steamy 12-year relationship that the rest of the entertainment industry wishes it had.

The love affair started with the original *Ridge Racer* on PSone, which featured jaw-dropping 3D graphics that made everyone completely forget about the 2D games they'd previously been playing. After popping out three more PSone lovechildren, Namco came to the party again with *Ridge Racer V* for the launch of PS2. The pair had a brief hiatus for a few years before producing the superb *Ridge Racer* to celebrate the PSP launch.

We're not going to lie to you. Things got a little ugly after that. We don't want to take sides but, let's just say Namco's a smelly pirate hooker who went behind PlayStation's back and popped out *Ridge Racer 6* with a lesser console. Of course PlayStation was the bigger person about

it and agreed to take Namco back. Best of all, this means we get to enjoy the fruit of PlayStation and Namco's raunchy make-up sex - *Ridge Racer 7*.

TREAT YOUR HDTV

We all say it's only gameplay that's important. We also claim a great personality is all we care about. Let's be honest, looks matter. We're comfortable with being shallow, so we're going to jump right in and talk about how *Ridge Racer 7* looks.

It looks HOT! If you're lucky enough to have a 1080p capable TV then *RR7* will deliver the most amazing image you've ever seen. There simply hasn't been any HD content yet that comes close to the sharpness and detail that *RR7* is capable of. Of course, HDTV and Blu-ray movies look incredible but they're never going to be able to match the sharpness of 3D graphics being rendered realtime in 1080p.

The environments in *RR7* stretch out for kilometres into the distance, yet thanks to the resolution (1080p produces more than two million pixels on-screen) you can still pick out staggeringly small details. Counting

the sparks coming off the back of a car 500 metres down the road or making out individual struts in a crane's support on the roof of a skyscraper a couple of kilometres away are all too easy in *RR7*.

The tracks are equally spectacular. Whether you're sliding sideways around the corner of picturesque highway overlooking a Swiss lake or barrelling through bustling Hong Kong streets, every track is packed with an astounding level of eye candy. Small details like the cheering spectators that shower you with confetti as you race by, the flapping flags that line the streets and the lumbering elephants grazing in the grasslands all combine to bring plenty of character to the visuals.

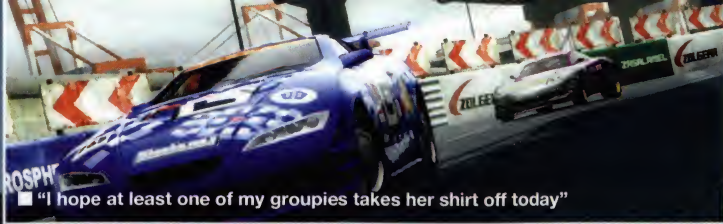
From a technical standpoint there's a lot to admire too. As mentioned, *RR7* runs in Full HD 1080p - the highest resolution any videogame has ever achieved. The PS3 manages this feat and still has enough grunt left over to deliver 14 cars on track at a silky smooth 60 frames per second. The game even throws in top-notch effects like High Dynamic Range Lighting. This effect comes into play when you're driving through a dim

tunnel and out into sunlight, your view is initially overly bright and sun-drenched, then it adjusts to normal over the next second.

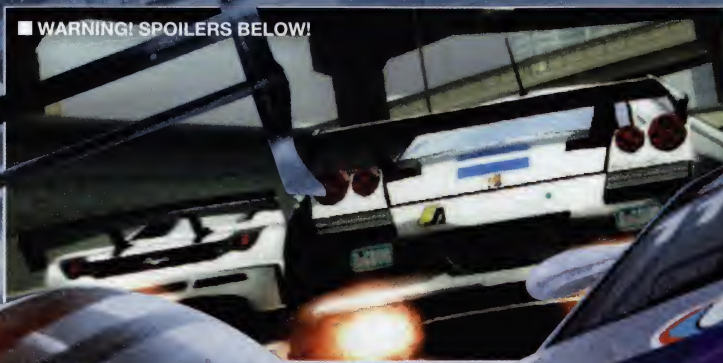
On the downside, *RR7* is far from the most standard TV-friendly PS3 game available. Most of *RR7*'s visual punch comes from its amazing resolution and detail, which you just can't appreciate well on a standard TV - plus Namco has made the odd decision of forcing the game to be viewed in cinematic 16:9 widescreen even if you're playing on a non-widescreen TV.

While *RR7* is unquestionably the sharpest racing game ever made, you don't have to be Nostradamus to realise that the future will see even more spectacular racers rolling onto shelves. *MotorStorm* will also be available for the Aussie launch and although it only runs at 720p its vehicles and landscapes are far more spectacular. Regardless of what television you're watching it on, *MotorStorm* is an orgy of twisted metal and mud wrestling mayhem that offers far more visual bang for your buck than *RR7*.

THE LONE RANGER



■ "I hope at least one of my groupies takes her shirt off today"



■ WARNING! SPOILERS BELOW!



■ "Hope I don't lose the sponsorship deal for whizzing in the team's Powerade barrel again"



■ This village can fund a racecourse but not bricks for its houses?

The *Ridge Racer* games exist in a genre all to themselves. Although the series predates other franchises like *Gran Turismo*, *Burnout* and *V8 Supercars*, it has ignored many of the elements that its competitors relish, like simulated physics, licensed cars and crash damage, and instead stayed very true to its original concept. *Ridge Racer*'s driving concept is all about speed, insane drifting and even more speed.

There are basically two schools of thought on cornering. There's every other racing game out there, the RTA, science and general public opinion all telling you to reduce speed as you approach corners. On the other side of the fence is *Ridge Racer*, which tells everyone to "stuff that nonsense up their exhaust pipe - I'm speeding up!" We're with *Ridge Racer* on this one.

Simulating reality should only ever be done in a game when it's fun. Braking isn't fun. Braking is for pussies. You're not a pussy are you?

The way to nail corners in *RR7* is to fly into them at full speed, release the gas and steer hard to start a drift, then hit the gas again and slide through the corner

sideways. Just because it defies all physical laws doesn't mean it's easy. Perfecting corners in *RR7* is at least as challenging as any other racer out there. The game gives you exceptional control over your drifts but it also routinely challenges you to perform feats like flinging your car around multiple hairpin turns at 300km/h, while sliding between the other six cars on the corner, with mere inches between success and disaster.

The AI is extremely tough as well. You'll often find yourself travelling around the course amongst large packs of cars. A single nudge against another car or the side of the track will regularly cost you a position that can take half a lap to regain. The AI pursues you so doggedly that even when you're a hundred metres in front with a full tank of nitrous, you can't afford to relax for a second.

TURBO CHARGED

The nitrous tank, although introduced in the PSP game, is still quite new to the *Ridge Racer* series and *RR7* tweaks it even further. In a similar style to the way you get more

juice in your nitro tank in *Burnout* for driving as dangerously as possible, *RR7* builds up your nitrous by drifting as fast as possible through corners.

Initially you'll just throw yourself sideways around the corners to fill your nitrous, then unleash it when you're on a straight. Before long you'll begin to take advantage of just how strategically it can be used. You can't refill your nitrous while you're using it but it does take a few seconds for the extra speed your nitrous has added to disappear. By timing a nitrous boost just right you can have it disengage the moment before you begin a drift, allowing you to drift around a corner at 30km/h above your car's normal top speed. This refills your nitrous tank far faster than normal and when done perfectly can give you an extra boost's worth from one corner (where normally it takes three to four corners to earn a boost).

The nitrous system turns into a surprisingly deep part of your racing strategy the further you delve into the game. *RR7* breaks its nitrous bar into three separate segments. You can either use each segment individually or you can build them up and

IF YOU AINT FIRST, YOU'RE LAST!

Beating the CPU cars is good fun but if you really want your trashtalk to have an effect you need to enlist some friends. *RR7* has one of the best online modes yet seen in a racer. Up to 14 players can trade paint online in a number of racing modes, the most interesting of which sees you racing cooperatively in teams of two. *RR7* also supports two-player split-screen racing across all of its tracks, but there are no other cars on track and the frame rate drops a little.





"For the first time ever in a *Ridge Racer* game *RR7* allows you to customise parts, performance and decals on all cars."

unleash double, and even triple, boosts to achieve ludicrous speeds. By purchasing new cars or different upgrades you can tailor your nitrous even further.

PIMP MY RIDE

You heard right. For the first time ever in a *Ridge Racer* game *RR7* allows you to customise parts, performance and decals on all cars. Although *RR7*'s cars are all fictional, many of them are based loosely on real-world models, and they all belong to one of the game's manufacturers. As you win races you build up credits that can be spent buying upgraded engine parts, tyres, suspension, spoilers and decals. Always wanted a Pac-Man decal for your roadster's roof? Get ready to get happy.

New cars can be either purchased from the store or won in events. You can also compete in manufacturer-specific events. Winning these strengthens your relationship with that manufacturer and allows you to purchase cars and parts from them at a

discounted rate.

RR7's Grand Prix mode is easily the most lengthy and comprehensive set of events this side of *GT4*. There are more than a hundred different events, covering everything from eight and 14 car races to manufacturer-specific events and time trials. The number of events and unlockable cars will keep anyone busy for a good 20 hours.

Although there's no faulting the amount of events, the difficulty curve leaves a little to be desired. The first 5-10 per cent of the game is pretty much a cake-walk for any *Ridge Racer* veterans. You start most events at the back of the grid but thanks to the new slipstreaming feature you can boost your

top speed by riding in an opponent's wake, then slingshotting past them when you catch up. Once you get the hang of drifting and slipstreaming you'll be able to cruise into first place on the vast majority of early events.

There are a handful of glaring exceptions to the game's initially easy difficulty. One event based on the airport track in particular saw our winning streak grind to a halt as we restarted the race 15 times over the course of an hour before finally cracking it. Other than a couple of problematic events the difficulty curve increases gradually to ensure that by the time you're unlocking the futuristic hover cars in the later part of the game, everyone will have found a suitable challenge.

RR7 is an amazingly accomplished racer to be created so early in the console's lifespan. The 1080p visuals are sharper than a set of shoe-slicing Ginsu knives and it's by far and away the most comprehensive and polished *Ridge Racer* yet. *RR7* is an absolute no brainer for series veterans, although the unusual drifting mechanics and the lack of licensed cars or tracks will likely leave *Need for Speed* and *Gran Turismo* enthusiasts disappointed. **Narayan Pattison**

PROS:

- Slowing down is for pussies
- You've got a 1080p HDTV

CONS:

- Fake cars and odd handling
- Your TV's older than you are

VERDICT: Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungee jumping.

A DECADE OF RIDGE RACER



RIDGE RACER

Format: PSone

Release: November 1995

Maximum Resolution: 224i

– 224x256 (28,672 pixels per frame)

It may look blockier than a LEGO car by today's standards but in 1995 *Ridge Racer* was the sexiest game ever made. Even harder to get past than the graphics was the fact there was only ONE track.



RIDGE RACER V

Format: PS2

Release: November 2000

Maximum Resolution: 480i

– 480x640 (153,600 pixels per frame)

Like its PSone predecessor *RRV* was a good early showcase of the PS2's advanced graphics. Although the handful of tracks and lack of anti-alasing meant it wasn't a keeper.



RIDGE RACER 7

Format: PS3

Release: March 2007

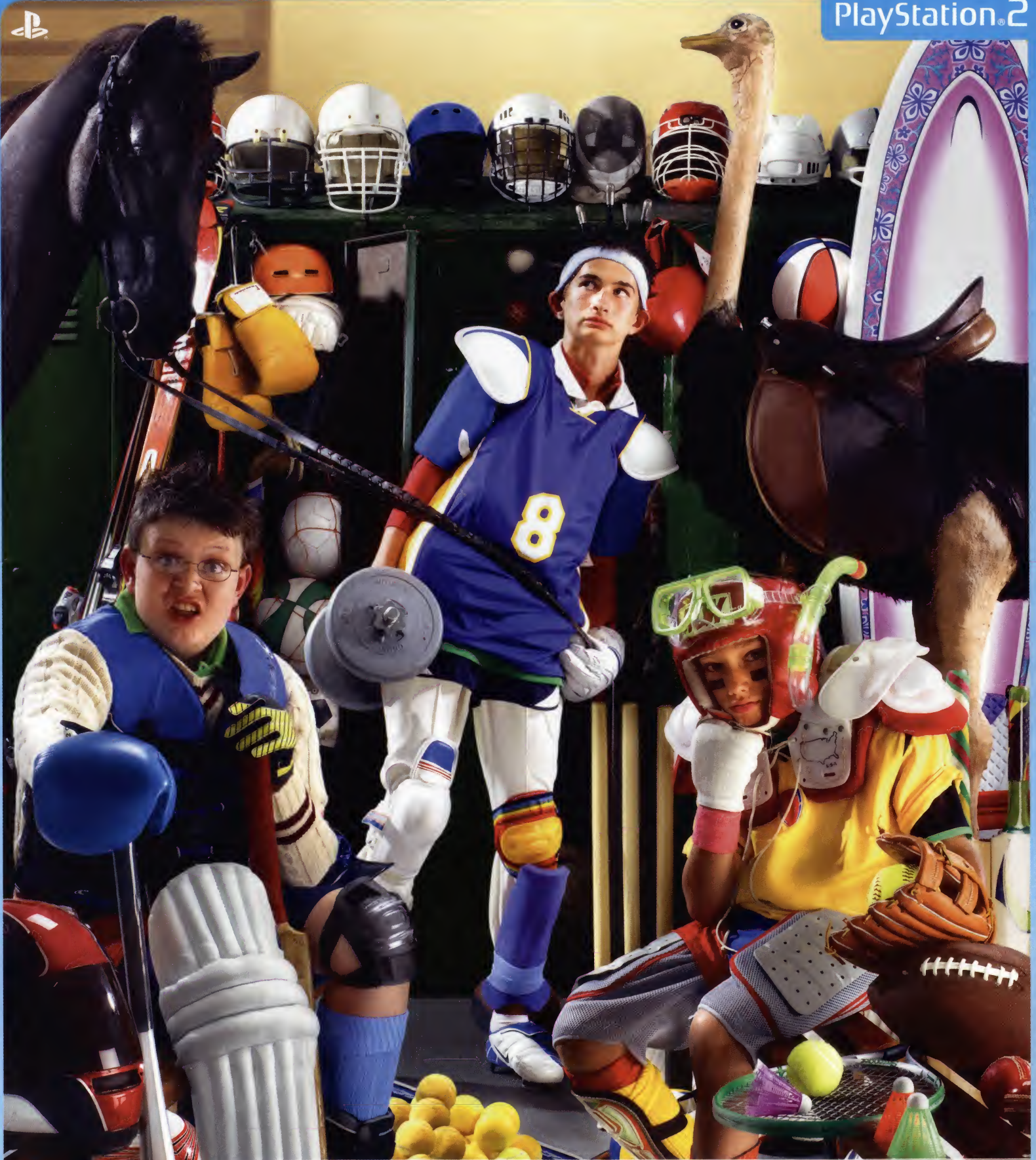
Maximum Resolution: 1080p

– 1080x1920 (2,073,600 pixels per frame)

With a whopping 21 tracks and more pixels than two million people could point sticks at, *Ridge Racer 7* certainly has come a hell of a long way since its humble beginnings. Just imagine what lies in store for the series.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09

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■ **GENRE:** DRIVING/SHOOTING
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** PSEUDO INTERACTIVE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-8
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 1080p
■ **WEB:** www.sega.com/games/

■ **BACK STORY:** *Full Auto* doesn't sound familiar? That's because the prequel was only released on the Xbox 360. Evidently developer Pseudo Interactive figured it'd need a system with a bit more grunt for this ambitious sequel. Roll on *Full Auto 2: Battlelines*.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Nice car. Let's mount some machine gun turrets on it!

The *Mad Max* films (well the first two, *Thunderdome*'s a bit crap, actually, watch it again. You'll see) were so good because they exploited three things that appeal to an audience. Particularly blokes. Those elements were:

- 1) A lawless, post apocalyptic society
- 2) Lots of crazy driving and shooting between cars, and
- 3) Explosions. A whole heaping swag of explosions.

Since then a veritable sub genre of movie, and more importantly for us, game has been created. The drivey/shooty genre. When driving or shooting aren't enough by themselves, well why not combine the two?

THAT'S PHILOSOPHY, THAT IS.

Anyway, that brings us to *Full Auto 2: Battlelines* for the PS3. Don't go looking for

the first *Full Auto*, as it only came out for the Xbox 360. But really, who cares as long as the game kicks arse most mightily, right?

Most of these types of games take their cues from *Mad Max* and others flicks of that genre. *Twisted Metal: Black* for instance is quite obviously the product of someone going: "Hey, we should make a game like that!" And this title is no exception.

UH...IS THERE A PLOT, TIGER?

Oh, right. Yeah. We should probably address the issue of the "story". It's not exactly deep. You have very little sense of who you are (basically because, well, you're in the car and you never leave it). You answer a female computerised voice called S.A.G.E. who tells you that evil gangs are roaming the streets in souped-up vehicles. Things are getting a little too fast and a little too furious for the local

law enforcement... and you need to dim it down a tad. By, um, blowing stuff up. It would have been nice to have seen the drivers of the cars, even just in cut scenes, or at least got a sense of what they're about (remember the clown car from *Twisted Metal: Black*? That guy was creepy-tastical). But most people aren't really going to care about the subtle nuance of a drive and shoot game so let's move on.

The gameplay itself is mainly featured in the career mode. This takes you from one series of events to the next – by an admittedly awkward menu system – and advises you what to do depending on the mission at hand. For instance some events are races and require you come first. Some involve you hunting down a specific car and blowing it into pretty, shiny little pieces. Other times you'll be in a flat-out

deathmatch, with an arena full of cars and it's a situation of the last car driving wins.

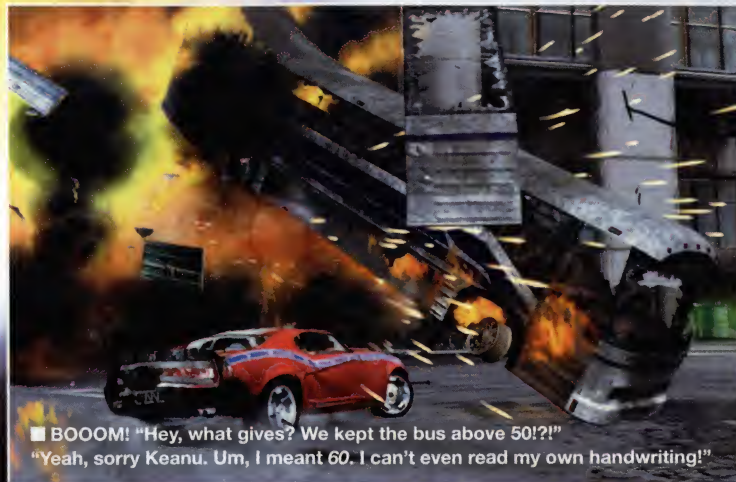
Objectives come in both primary and secondary flavours, but really unless you're massively anal and obsessed with new paint jobs and various frankly irrelevant unlockables you'll probably not feel the need to go back and finish the secondary objectives.

WHEN TOO MUCH CHAOS IS, ER, TOO MUCH

Full Auto 2 has a few problems. Primarily it doesn't seem to know what it wants to be – a slick racer or a car combat game. It tries to be both and somehow... just doesn't do either genre justice. OK, for instance the title seems to have taken its graphical cues from *Burnout*. Now, don't get us wrong. Here at *OPS* towers we love the *Burnout* series like a dog



■ This game's not so much fast and furious as it is slowish and 'a bit miffed'



■ BOOOM! "Hey, what gives? We kept the bus above 50!?"
"Yeah, sorry Keanu. Um, I meant 60. I can't even read my own handwriting!"



INFO BYTE

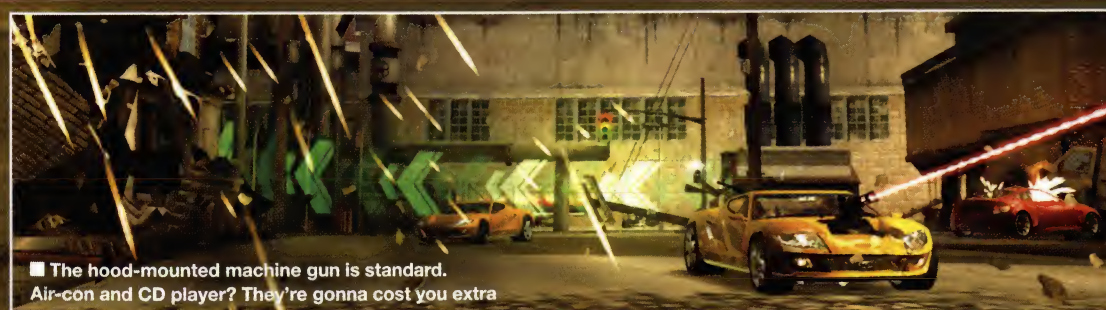
As fun as these vehicles were we'd like a game where the baddies, and indeed goodies, look a bit more like this. Someone get on a *Mad Max* game please? Cheers.

likes dining on its own vomit (a lot) but when you're playing a game where the object is to blow seven kinds of crap out of your opponents it seems a trifle odd you're doing so in schmick cars that look like they've driven straight off the lot. We hate to harp on about *Mad Max* or *Twisted Metal*, but surely if a car is designed for ultimate destruction it should look the part, and not like it's driving some Hollywood celeb to the premiere of their latest movie.

Another problem, and this is the biggie, are the physics. You know how, say, *MotorStorm* feels perfect? Each vehicle has the right heft and weight? *FA2* does not. Everything feels light. Certainly the range of vehicles is varied – from sporty little numbers, to big, hulking trucks – but they all feel the same: light as air. It's a tad disconcerting hooning around the track with your car flip-flopping all over the place like a freshly caught sooty grunter (it's a type of fish, look it up, seriously).



■ These cars blow up faster than Dave Kozicki's rubber girlfriend on a Friday night



■ The hood-mounted machine gun is standard. Air-con and CD player? They're gonna cost you extra

BLOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME

Remember how in the *Burnout* games each track had multiple paths? Well that's a feature here too, however it's hard to determine shortcut from background sometimes. Shoot a wall for long enough and it collapses, the building the wall was part of does likewise and voilà – a shortcut! However this is never consistent. Another, almost identical building down the road a spell



■ Remember Cher had that song about "turning back time"? Man, that Cher was one scary looking dude...



■ There are always big risks when you ride on public transport (one time this huge fat guy farted in the seat beside us)



will respond to your ordinance with a casual shrug (if, you know, buildings could shrug). That's not necessarily a bad thing, but when you're trying to blow away your enemies, pick up powerups and not hit solid objects – uncovering shortcuts usually depends on a great deal of luck rather than skill. It's a very hectic game, lacking precision. Having said that you are in for some truly memorable moments – like the time we were being chased by a foe who far outclassed us, so we knocked over all the struts that were holding up a dry-docked boat in a shipyard, promptly causing said tanker to fall over and crush our pursuer. Unfortunately great moments like this feel haphazard and hard to repeat. Although it was very cool indeed.

Another nice feature that should be mentioned is "unwreck". This is a limited amount of reverse time capability. Say you're right near the end of the race, and some hefty truck comes barreling out of nowhere knocking you into oblivion, pipping you right at the post? Don't throw the (considerably lighter) PS3 controller out the window. Use unwreck and reverse time. It'll take you back a few precious seconds and you'll be able to dodge the truck. Hopefully. Again, luck rather than skill seems to

"You get to shoot stuff and drive fast – and the destruction of your enemies is satisfyingly slow-mo'd"

reign with this game as it lacks a fine touch, and precision, but rewinding time in games is always pretty cool.

IN CONCLUSION...

Full Auto 2: Battlelines is not a bad game, in fact it's quite fun when you first pick it up. Everything seems to explode. You get to shoot stuff and drive fast – and the destruction of your enemies is satisfyingly slow-mo'd. However the graphics, while good, are not really representative of what the PS3 can do. In fact the *Burnout* series got the sense of speed down a lot better. Also the game, rather perturbingly, suffers from the occasional graphical glitch or bit of slow down. If this was the most

beautifully polished diamond of a game ever, we could sort of look the other way. But it's not. So we can't.

Multiplayer options are pretty standard – if you can actually find a game to join – and add little to the mix. Basically if you're mad about cars and shooting, and are willing to overlook quite a few niggles, you'll have a good time with *Full Auto 2: Battlelines*. It's a fun, shallow, title. However it just doesn't feel like it's explored its potential because conceptually it's an absolute cracker. Fun, brainless shooting and driving. If that sounds like your thing give *FA2* a go. The rest should stick with *MotorStorm* or watching *Mad Max 2* again. Damn that movie rocks. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:

- Destructible environments
- Graphics are mostly slick

CONS:

- Gameplay is a bit haphazard
- Sloppy frame rate at times

VERDICT: *Battlelines* is a game that brims with potential, but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN. AGAIN

Ever had one of those moments where you just did the wrong thing. Say "hey you don't sweat much for a fat chick!" on a date? Try to drink yourself invisible and run naked through the streets of Kings Cross (er, not that any of us have ever done that "cough")? Auditioned for *Big Brother*? All these stupid, stupid things and more could be reversed if, like in *Full Auto 2*, you could have the unwreck feature. Press **LB** and you'll be hooning back in time to right what you stuffed up. Beware, though, this power is limited. And you'll often make the same mistake again. History repeats, it's true.



OFFICIAL SCORE:
07



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■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** GAME REPUBLIC
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** TBC
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** au.playstation.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Game Republic is a small Tokyo studio run by *Street Fighter* creator Yoshiki Okamoto. When not developing minor Japan-only titles such as *Every Party*, Game Republic works for Sony on what is now the series called *Genji*.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

Is that a big sword or are you just pleased to be a PS3 launch game?

Genji: Dawn of the Samurai was a decent hack 'n' slash PS2 adventure set in Japan 1,000 years ago. It pushed the old girl as far as she could go and even showed signs of being overly ambitious (which helps explain the frame rate problems it sometimes ran into) while, at the same time, merely delivering the kind of repetitive game experience that we'd been through a thousand times or more since the eighties. The good news is that the developer's technical ambitions have mostly been realised (although some frame rate drops remain). And the bad



■ In the days before the invention of medicated genital shampoos, getting rid of crabs was a bitch!



■ Wait, did that last caption actually say, "medicated genital shampoo"?



■ "Woah, getting dizzy here... I think my next 'special attack' is going to consist of me vomiting on someone..."

news is that the developer forgot to do anything about the gameplay.

Days of the Blade's cleverest touch is its cast of four playable characters whose styles differ according to their physiques and the weapons they're equipped with. Yoshitsune, for example, is the main man. He's an athletic swordsman, a typical all-rounder. He has two fairly big swords that can be used in rotation to keep enemies on the run (or, if they don't run, dice 'em). Yoshitsune's comrade Benkei, at one extreme, is the super-sized wielder of a whacking great staff, which he uses (predictably) to whack people with. The band's girl power rep is Shizuka, whose name means 'calm', but

who actually tends to trigger riots with her grappling hook – it can be used as a weapon and is also handy when she's trying to get across otherwise impossible jumps. Finally, there's Lord Buson, who is the character with the silliest name, and he has a pole that he waves around. So yes, all the boxes have been ticked.

Once the action begins, the first thing that will hit you (if it's not the sword of an approaching enemy) is how immediate *Genji* feels. There's no messing about, and although cut-scenes are here to tie everything together, they don't cut into the gameplay unnecessarily. Various situations are explained (this is feudal Japan, and there are plenty of feuds

– thank you – between the game's two main factions) but the solution is nearly always the same: kick samurai arse. The problem is, this soon becomes repetitive. In spite of the option to change characters at any point during the flow of a stage simply by tapping the d-pad, you'll soon find that only Yoshitsune is really worth persevering with. The other three ass-kickers are just back-up.

There are some RPG elements here, but they have very little effect on the progression of the game. Level-ups are triggered automatically as the game goes on, yet enemy strength levels increase at an equivalent rate, so you'll still feel like you're playing at the same level of

challenge. And on occasions when things do get a bit tricky, Benkei's huge staff (it's the size of a tree – it is a tree) is useful as a weapon of mass destruction.

New weapon acquisitions, which are available for all four characters, provide some hope of change, but there's no real consistency to how they increase in potency. It's a seemingly random trawl through the workshop of an 11th century Japanese smith, and you'll probably end up just sticking to the guns (swords) you were given at the start of the game.

There are some interesting gameplay features here, though. For one, tap the **LB** button and *Genji's* playable characters enter Kamui mode, which initiates a



■ "I've got to keep my flaming rod in my pants otherwise I'm bound to attract more crabs!"



■ Keep an eye out for enemy weak points (Hint: it's often their balls)



■ Not as exciting as it looks, we're afraid



■ "Do you mind? I'm trying to slash here"

sequence of combos and screen-clearing attacks that are separate from your main line of attacking moves. Neatly, this setup lets you pull off extravagant specials by following an on-screen chain of button symbols. It's a nifty combination of rhythm-action and... er, action-action. But unfortunately, even this stagnates after a while, as there's no variation in the effectiveness of Kamui attacks. You know what you're going to get each time, and you'll use it only when necessary. It's not a main feature as such; it's just another back-up plan. After all, you can get through most of *Genji* simply by using Yoshitsune and the swords he's equipped with at the outset.

One of the few features to make a real contribution to the game – at least, one that you'll make use of all the time – is centred on the right analogue stick, which acts as a kind of 'controller of gymnastics'. Pull it and your character will pull shapes to evade incoming attacks, whether by back-flipping, commando rolling, or just diving to one side like a goalkeeper. It's well worth making use of the right analogue stick in this capacity, although we did find it a bit difficult get our thumbs across quickly from attack commands on the face buttons to defensive manoeuvres on the stick.

Genji's whole reason to exist (in case you hadn't realised) is its combat. There's very little in the way of exploration and platforming – just attack after bloody attack. Fortunately, the fighting system is generally sound. It's as solid here as it was in the PS2 original; only, thanks to the technical superiority of *Days of the Blade*, it feels noticeably smoother.

Combos for each character can be learned, but hey – why bother when you can mash buttons? Besides, the system actually encourages such mindless play by swamping the screen with enemies that have a tendency to gang up on you and attack from a variety of angles

MOTION SICKNESS

Days of the Blade has an option for SIXAXIS motion sensor support, but our advice is: don't do it. The sensor, when enabled, turns the whole controller into a less user-friendly realisation of what the right analogue stick manages perfectly well by default – that is, it helps your character to dodge enemy attacks. Only, where the SIXAXIS is concerned, it doesn't help. It just ends up with you dodging attacks that aren't being made every time you reach for a beer or move your arm.





■ "Anybody need some medicated genital shampoo?" said the medicated genital shampoo salesman with a time machine



■ "This isn't what I meant when I asked for a cutting edge experience..." SLASH!

"[Genji] is pretty [...] all the environments here have an otherworldly glow to them, like dream scenes in a Jim Jarmusch movie."

simultaneously. And the best form of defence, of course, is frenzied attack. Often the game's camera obstructs these sequences, however, and you'll find yourself in the awkward position of fighting against a dozen swordsmen and a crap cameraman.

It's clear that the camera, which is fixed, has been positioned at all times to make *Genji* look cool. But in going all-out for eye candy, Game Republic has forgotten that a game must be playable for it to be really sweet. As a result, there are times when it's impossible to be fully aware of where all your enemies are lurking. And when they're so intent on cutting you up, that's not a good thing.

In spite of its inconsistencies and repetitive nature there's definitely one thing about *Days of the Blade* that saves it from being a complete disaster: it is pretty. The use of lighting is particularly impressive. All the environments here have an otherworldly glow to them, like dream scenes in a Jim Jarmusch movie. Character detail is excellent, as well, and their animation is wonderfully fluid. But unfortunately, like a really pretty girl who knows how pretty she is, *Genji* just can't help posing

for the camera. And that, as we've mentioned, messes up the gameplay. It has frame rate problems, too, although we've never met a girl running at less than 30fps...

Genji is not the type of game we expect to succeed on the PS3. It's all flash and style, but with very little substance beneath its stunning-at-a-glance visuals (and even those looks are called into question when high enemy counts cause some fairly horrid slowdown). Ultimately, the developer seems short of ideas. There's no width to the game – it's just a procession from one enemy-filled area to the next, punctuated by boss fights (the highlight of the *Genji* show) and brief cut-scenes.

Although combat is smooth and, when Benkei lands a big hit, momentarily satisfying, there's nothing here that can stand the test of time. In fact, set aside ten hours or so and you can see everything *Genji* has to offer (it doesn't offer much). If you simply want a quick demo of the PS3's ability to render gorgeous Japanese countryside environments in real-time, it might be worth trying *Genji*. But if you want a real game of this type, wait for *Devil May Cry 4*. **Jonti Davies**

PROS:

- Pretty visuals
- Multiple playable characters

CONS:

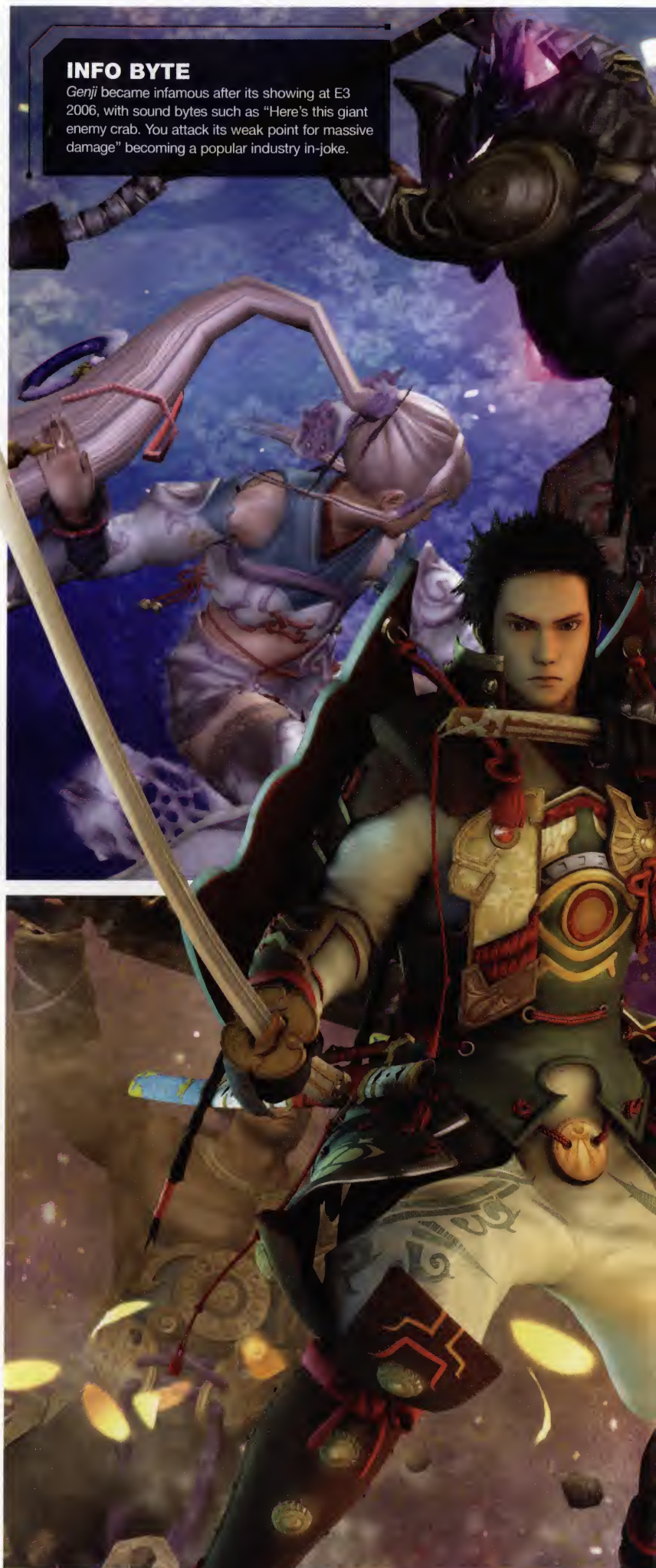
- Soon becomes repetitive
- Standard (read: dull) gameplay

VERDICT: Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
05

INFO BYTE

Genji became infamous after its showing at E3 2006, with sound bytes such as "Here's this giant enemy crab. You attack its weak point for massive damage" becoming a popular industry in-joke.





INTERACTION



WIN!

One of March's must see releases, the action filled Scorsese drama, *The Departed*, takes place in South Boston and sees the state police force waging a war against the city's top organized crime ring.

To celebrate this release we're giving you the chance to win 1 of 10 Martin Scorsese themed packs which include *The Departed* on DVD and a t-shirt as well as a copy of *Goodfellas* and *The Aviator* valued around \$120

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■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** STUDIO LIVERPOOL
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-11
■ **PRICE:** TBC
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** au.playstation.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Studio Liverpool is the phoenix that rose from the ashes of legendary UK developer Psygnosis. Its two biggest properties are *WipEout* and *Formula One*. The team also developed the new downloadable version of *Lemmings* for the PS3.



■ **Formula 51?** It's a really crap Samuel L Jackson movie...



■ **Oh, yeah... pit crew? Yeah, it's Barichello here... What? Oh, nothing! Just wanted to see what you guys were up to...**

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION



Studio Liverpool takes pole...

It's essential that a new format has a new Formula One game to get it off to a good start. There are too many F1 fans out there for the sub-genre to be ignored, and wisely Sony delegated responsibility for the first PS3 F1 sim to Studio Liverpool. The team that created the original *Formula One* for the PSone (remember that classic?) is back to its best with *Championship Edition*.

Of course this game is fully licensed by the FIA, the sport's governing body, which ensures that all the drivers,

teams, circuits, liveries, and so on are bang up to date and representative of real-life F1. That's a good base to build on. And build on it, Studio Liverpool certainly has.

One of the best things about *F1CE* is that it's a fully configurable experience. Just by changing the game's difficulty settings, you can find a level of play that perfectly suits what you're looking for. So arcade-heads in want of quick action – without having to worry about understeer, aerodynamics, brakes locking, or the car completely

spinning out – can dive straight in and get their kicks. And on the other hand, dedicated F1 nuts can crank up the difficulty level to effectively change *F1CE* from an arcade-y racer (which it defaults to) to the kind of full-on simulation that demands plate-spinning levels of concentration. Even by turning off steering and braking assistance, the feel of the game changes drastically.

INSANE SPEEDS

Maybe it's just us and our failing eyesight (we jest), but recent PS2 F1

games seem to have failed to convey properly just how insanely quick the sport really is. Happily, though, *F1CE* is very fast. It gives you the thrill of knowing that you're putting a machine to its limits and that at any moment it could all go disastrously wrong. Especially when it's configured to play like a sim, *F1CE* delivers a sensation of speed that can be almost terrifying.

Although *Formula One Championship Edition* seems to be running at about 30 frames per second (which makes it similar to *MotorStorm* but only half as smooth



■ **"Dude, no cupholder? Oh man, my Slurpee's making my hand cold..."**



■ Get used to this view if you ever take on the OPS team online (because you'll be lapping us)



■ "Rain? Typical - I only just washed this thing yesterday!"

as *Ridge Racer 7*), it holds steady at that rate so the gameplay isn't compromised in any way. Crucially, we haven't seen any slowdown anywhere in the game. Analogue steering is perfectly responsive at all times and cars react to the track surface as you'd expect them to, no matter what conditions you're driving in.

In fact, the weather effects are another highlight here. When it rains, it *really* rains. Visibility becomes limited and, with what's bound to become a genre standard, even the screen (your TV screen, that is) seemingly gets splashed from the inside. It's a really cool effect and in 720p it looks phenomenal. Heat haze, too, is so realistic that it had us mesmerised on the starting grid at Indianapolis to the point where we forgot to accelerate at green. Cars, drivers' helmets, trackside detail: it's all finished with enough polish to make you sneeze. No matter where you look, *F1CE* has something stunning to show off.

ALA MODE

In terms of gameplay modes and the level of challenge here, *F1CE* again provides everything we were hoping for. Quick Race, Time Attack, Single Weekend and World Championship modes are all self-explanatory, while Career mode is a comprehensive game of driver development that centres on the drive to get your man recruited by a top team. There's also an online multiplayer mode, which enters 11 human racers into the field of 22, and this adds quite a deal to *F1CE*'s lifespan.

Studio Liverpool has thought of

PROS:

- Gameplay to match all skill levels
- Official teams, drivers and circuits

CONS:

- Commentary is sparse
- Frame-rate could be higher

VERDICT: *F1CE* looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.



■ "Hey watch it, pal. This isn't an overtaking lane!"
"Oh, I'm sorry. My mist-- Hey, wait a second..."

INFO BYTE

The Japanese version of *F1CE* doesn't contain any multiplayer modes at all. So spare a thought for your poor Japanese gaming brethren when you're revving up online.



■ Red Bull gives you wings.
As does 'radiation', if comic books are anything to go by

"... it's all finished with enough polish to make you sneeze. No matter where you look, *F1CE* has something stunning to show off"

... CAMERA, ACTION!

Formula One Championship Edition provides six different in-game camera views of its action. Our favourite is the view from directly above the driver, which gives a good vantage point and at the same time does an excellent job of conveying the speed at which the game is running.



OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09

■ **GENRE:** FLIGHT
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT ROMANIA
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.blazing-angels.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Ubisoft Romania has been around for some time although its games have been niche titles like chess games, submarine sims and *POD Speedzone* – a racer where an alien virus infected the cars on an outer space mining colony, creating mutant cars. Right...



BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

Grab your egg-and-fours and let's get the bacon delivered!

To be honest, everything we know about WWII pilot banter we learned from Monty Python and the borderline prehistoric 1991 PC classic *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. That said, we still don't really know what one's egg-and-fours are and whether it's actually appropriate to grab them in a mess hall full of men. We also don't know why we need to get any bacon delivered or what we're supposed to do with it when it arrives. However, we're fairly certain a 'cabbage crate' is a German aircraft, 'hitting the silk' is

parachuting to safety and 'buying the farm' is the smouldering end to your combat career, so we figured we'd be able to scrape by.

TALLY-HO!

Blazing Angels is an arcade flight sim packed with plenty of aerial action. The likes of *Ace Combat* have ruled PlayStation's skies for some time now, but *Blazing Angels* is a refreshing change to the fire-and-forget, techno wizardry of modern jet sims – it's all about close quarters, low-level, old-

school dogfighting.

You'll don the flight jacket of an American throttle-jockey and reclaim the skies over Europe and the Pacific, participating in crucial WWII clashes from the Battle of Britain, the North African desert, Pearl Harbour, Midway, the D-Day invasion, the Battle for Berlin and more. There's plenty of variety in the missions too – you'll go from torpedoing ships to weaving your way through a Norwegian fjord and protecting the skies above Dunkirk to bombing factories in a hulking B-17

Flying Fortress. There are also a wide range of standalone modes on offer. These range from pick-up-and-play arcade missions, separate dogfighting and bombing mini-campaigns, one-on-one ace duels plus a host of co-op and adversarial multiplayer modes for two-player split-screen and 16-player online stoushes, from solo and team dogfights to kamikaze attacks.

CHOCKS AWAY

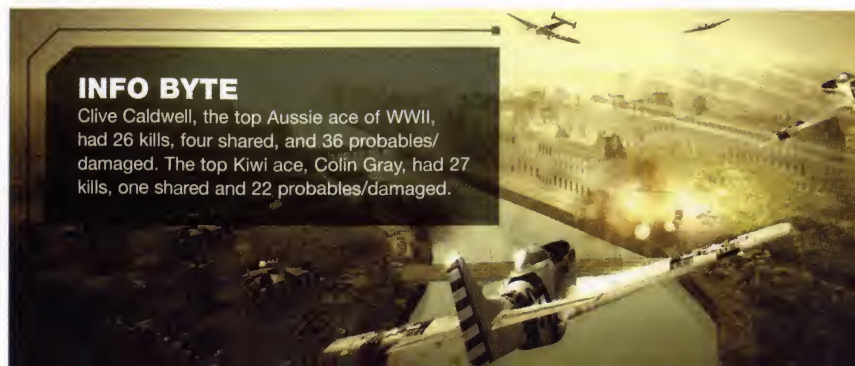
Blazing Angels features a hefty hangar packed with an impressive 46 vintage

■ Germany. Not pictured: Kraftwerk



INFO BYTE

Clive Caldwell, the top Aussie ace of WWII, had 26 kills, four shared, and 36 probables/damaged. The top Kiwi ace, Colin Gray, had 27 kills, one shared and 22 probables/damaged.





■ A Zero. Not to be confused with whoever won *Australian Idol* last year



■ France. Not pictured: Gérard Depardieu



■ Dawn. Or dusk. We can never tell

planes from the US, Britain, Germany and Japan, all of which ought to please the aeronautically inclined. A few notable omissions may have the beard and sandals crowd crying foul (no Thunderbolt, no Corsair, no Lightning – what's up with that?) but there's a great range on offer spanning high-end fighters to bombers. You can expect most of the usual suspects (perennial faves like the Spitfire and P-51D Mustang naturally make welcome appearances), but Ubisoft has padded out the list with a few welcome oddities too like the ME-163 Komet, a rocket-powered German deathtrap, and the Dornier Do-335, a bizarre Nazi fighter with a propeller at the front and rear of the fuselage. There's the odd anachronism (the A-1 Skyraider, the P-51H Mustang and the P-82 Twin Mustang were each in some phase of development before the end of WWII but none of them saw any combat until Korea) but it's an exceedingly small fault that certainly doesn't make the game any less fun to play.

12 O'CLOCK HIGH

When *Blazing Angels* took off on PC and Xbox 360 last year it was considered passable but was roundly criticised for awkward targeting controls, the lack of a cockpit view, some horrendously bad difficulty spikes and jarringly awful voiceovers (complete with desperately

pathetic German and Japanese accents). However, instead of porting the title to PS3, warts and all, Ubisoft has gone about polishing up each of these nasty blemishes.

Each plane has a cockpit view that, while taking up a fair amount of screen space, increases the degree of immersion substantially. *Blazing Angels* also features two targeting systems; the arrows that hover at the edge of your screen that have served many a flight sim well in the past as well as a visual lock you can activate by holding **LB** (this brings the targeted enemy in view immediately regardless of your plane's direction – you'll need to bring yourself around to face it). The latter is a little disorientating but quite useful when you become accustomed to it and used in conjunction with each the systems work quite well. With some fine-tuning of the missions and a swag of new voiceovers, *Blazing Angels* for PS3 is superior to the other format versions in every department.

But it's not perfect.

While the motion-sensing controls work surprisingly well (turn and pivot the pad and your plane will do likewise) we found they're quite tricky to use in a dogfight and it's generally far easier to

use the analogue sticks (there are two flight models, arcade and simulation; arcade is the most forgiving while simulation allows for extra movement like 180 degree rolls and yaw). The visuals aren't quite as incredible as we'd expected either. The aircraft themselves are lovingly detailed and there are some great effects to be witnessed (get down low against the ocean and your propeller wash will whip up the waves and your bullets will form a series of splashes as they slam into the sea) but everything is a little underwhelming close up. Soaring above London in the Battle of Britain you'll see the entire city stretch out beneath you, but hit the deck and it's all a bit bland. The explosions look great too, but up close and personal the frame rate stutters as you pierce the oily black cloud left by your unfortunate adversary. There was also the odd occasion where the dialogue would drop out inexplicably and we'd have to rely on the subtitles for mission pointers.

All things considered however, *Blazing Angels* has succeeded in what it has set out to be – a fun, old-fashioned aerial blast 'em up. The appeal starts to wane as repetition sets in, but it's a sound game that should entertain even the most pedantic planespotter. **— Luke Reilly**

"WHAT-HO SQUIFFY!"

With you on the bulk of your missions are three wingmen who act as temporary power-ups. During missions you can cycle through three different formations (standard, attacking or defensive) and call upon your wingmen for help when they are suitably 'charged up'. One will offer a button combo to repair your plane if it's about to fall out of the sky, one will taunt the enemy and attract fighters away from you and one will drop in on your six and blow away any pursuers. They can only be called on once or twice during a mission, so use them wisely!



■ Some of your enemies can be harder to shake than a pair of concrete maracas



■ London. Not pictured: Poms whingeing about the cricket



"Blazing Angels for PS3 is superior to the other format versions in every department."

PROS:

- Great atmosphere, rousing score
- Accessible, robust multiplayer

CONS:

- You'd rather more realism
- You prefer afterburners

VERDICT: It's not without its flaws but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
07

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA BLACK BOX
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (2-8 ONLINE)
■ **PRICE:** \$109.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The *Need for Speed* franchise has been around longer than you think, making boy racers' pants explode since 1994. EA has again attempted to reinvent the franchise with *Need for Speed Carbon*, making its debut on the PS3.



■ Vehicle frequently sideways. Driver often dead



■ Sure it's pretty, but it's got no back seat!

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

The element of surprise...



In the most non-homoerotic way possible, *Need for Speed Carbon* is a man's game, allowing you to do all the things you'll quite possibly never get the chance to do in real life. Think about it; this game features expensive cars you'll never own, hot French speaking chicks you will never shag, and crazy police chases you will never be involved in (unless you fancy spending 10 years in the clink). In short this game is wish fulfilment pushed to the max, and it is all the better for it.

Following from where *Most Wanted* left off, *Carbon* introduces you to the city of Palmont and some familiar characters from previous games in the franchise. Initially, through some flashy cut-scenes,

the basic story of *Carbon* is elaborated upon, and the main characters Darius and Nikki are brought into the fray. The cut-scenes retain their look from *Most Wanted*, in which CGI is mixed with real live-footage. The result is a slick, stylised look that is very much *Sin City*-esque; it all looks extremely cool.

So it's a shame then that the actual acting quality has also remained consistent with *Most Wanted*, in short; cheesier than jacuzzi full of Stilton. Calling the performances B-grade would be a staggering insult to all those amazing midday movies your mum watches. Sadly, *Need for Speed Carbon* has more than a few unintentional laugh out loud moments,

especially the when the poncey actors try and talk tough.

TURF WARS

It's just as well the game itself is better than the acting. *Carbon* is developed around inter-crew racing and the battle for 'turf'. There are four main gangs all vying for territory, and it's your job to try and take over the entire city of Palmont with your mad driving 'skillz'. All in all there are four major territories, which are further subdivided into smaller areas. In order to gain an area you must win more than half of the races in that area; to gain the entire territory however, you must have all the sub-areas under your control.

The races themselves have changed little from previous iterations of *Need for Speed*. The arcade style of the franchise remains, and *Carbon* is still very much pick up and play. Its nowhere near as in-depth as *Gran Turismo* and the like, but the core gameplay is effortlessly fun. Nothing beats hammering it into a corner, drifting effortlessly in slick slo-mo via the speedbreak feature, before zipping off into the distance with a tank full of nitrous blowing out of your arse. It looks cooler than Samuel L. Jackson eating ice cream [I thought you said non-homoerotic? - Ed.], and feels like it too.

The range of race types are also pretty broad. There are your usual street races, but its all kept interesting with race-types

■ "Okay, every extra mile we chase this guy I'm adding an orifice to the cavity search!"





■ "Here's my number. Call me when you get out. Do you like Italian?"



■ "You have the right to remain pixelated"



■ Drive it like you stole it, or at least like you borrowed it from your mum without asking

such as speedtrap, race wars, circuit races and so forth. The speed trap race is particularly cool: you have a series of speed traps set up along a course, and the winner is the driver who racks up the highest combined speed at all these speed traps. Its a welcome break from the standard races found throughout the game.

The major innovation introduced in *Carbon* is the canyon race, a race-type exclusively used for boss battles. After gaining enough areas you will eventually be viewed as a threat by the main boss of the territory and be challenged to a canyon race. These races are extremely dangerous, and can be frustratingly difficult, but are probably one of the main highlights of *Carbon*, as the tension is cranked up a notch or two; due to the fact that you can break through the barrier and fall over the edge of a canyon at pretty much any time during the duel. Win the race, however, and one of the four main territories is yours.

GANG-TASTIC

The game attempts to add a little bit of variety and spice to the career mode via the newly updated crew system. Basically, as you race, different members of your 'crew' help you win by running rivals off the road (the blocker), racing in front of you to create a slipstream (the drafter), or racing ahead to help find shortcuts for you (the scout).

"Need for Speed Carbon succeeds in making just enough tweaks to the formula to justify another purchase, but little more."

Some of these team members work better than others. The drafters, for example, are about as useful as a chocolate furnace, since there is rarely a straight area sufficiently long enough to build-up speed in a slipstream. The blockers are useful but are mainly limited to smashing into racers behind you. The scouts are decent too, although they spend so much time in front of you they tend to win most of the races on your behalf, rendering you fairly useless.

Like most EA games, *Need for Speed Carbon* succeeds in making just enough tweaks to the formula to justify another purchase, but little more. The games

instantaneous arcade-style gameplay is fun, but for the most part there's nothing you haven't seen in other iterations of the franchise. There is, of course, the huge graphical leap into high definition via the PS3 and a couple of updated gameplay mechanics, but that's yer whack. Fans of the franchise might be a little disappointed with the lack of innovation (and the lack of drag racing), but others will enjoy the familiarity. If you fall into the latter group and don't mind the repetition, then we can thoroughly recommend *Carbon* – a worthy entry into the *Need for Speed* franchise. If not, it might be worthwhile steering clear until the next sequel. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:

- Extremely polished driving action
- Great range of rides

CONS:

- Team system is hit and miss
- Voice acting is dire

VERDICT: A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

08

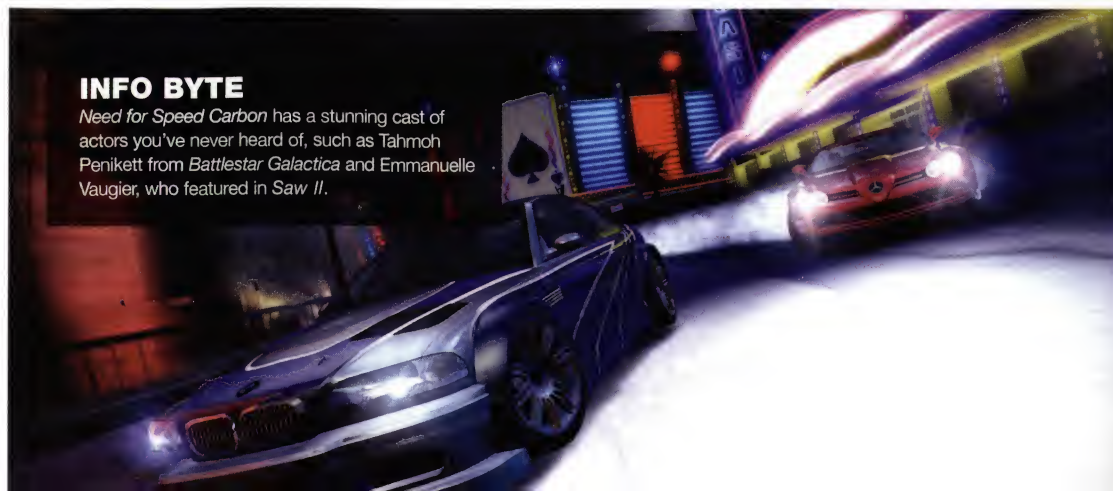
AN IDIOT'S DREAM COME TRUE...

Do you remember playing driving games back in the day? Do you remember that, for some bizarre reason, you thought moving the actual controller in the direction of the corner would make you turn faster? You felt like an idiot, but for some ungodly reason you still did it, with sweat trickling down your face and a grimace like you were squeezing out an enormous turd. Well guess what; now you can breathe easy! With the PS3 version of *Need for Speed Carbon* your dreams have come true. Using the SIXAXIS' motion-sensor, the car will actually turn faster if you move it in the direction of the curve. Hurrah! If that isn't worth losing the rumble feature on the DualShock, we don't know what is...



INFO BYTE

Need for Speed Carbon has a stunning cast of actors you've never heard of, such as Tahmoh Penikett from *Battlestar Galactica* and Emmanuelle Vaugier, who featured in *Saw II*.



■ Dodge this

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** VISUAL CONCEPTS
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** TAKE 2

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-7 (2-10 ONLINE)
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 1080p
■ **WEB:** www.2ksports.com

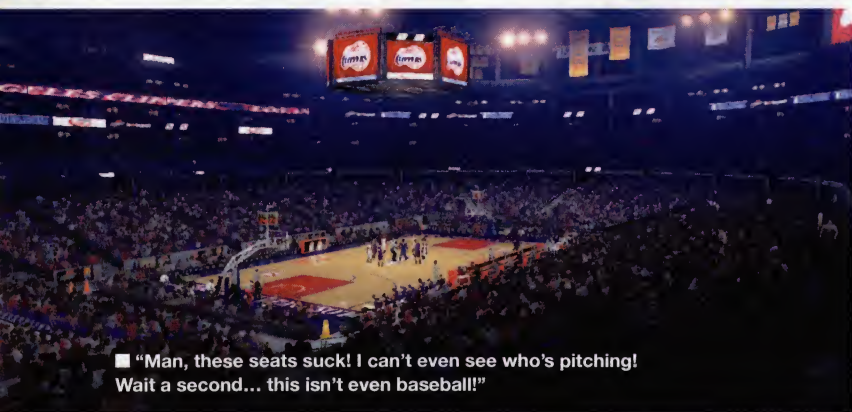
■ **BACK STORY:** Developer Visual Concepts has been around since 1988, producing 16-bit games such as *Clayfighter* and *Claymates*. After being bought by Take 2 Interactive, it set up Kush Games as a wholly owned subsidiary to help the shareholders make a stack o' cash.

■ "Where's your other hand?" "Between these two pillows"
"Those aren't PILLOWS!"



INFO BYTE

No Jordan here, but if you select Street mode you can play with "celebrities". Unfortunately the group doesn't include folk like Paris Hilton or Chuck Norris, just US rappers.



■ "Man, these seats suck! I can't even see who's pitching!
Wait a second... this isn't even baseball!"



■ "Can't... quite... reach it... Damn!
This is the one game I don't wear heels!"

NBA 2K7

Fun with balls without the awkward morning after...



You know the score. Five guys to a team, two teams, two hoops, most points, blah, blah. What? We sound unenthused? Let's get something out of the way, *NBA 2K7* is the best basketball sim out – no contest. EA's *NBA Live* series has recently gone downhill like a cripple in a three-wheeled wheelchair, and Sony's *NBA 07* is more like the old coin muncher, *Run and Gun*, as you can score with one hand down your crack. But after playing *2K7* extensively our eyes started wandering towards other things: the image of *MotorStorm* still watermarked on our retinas, the young lady in the adjacent office building who likes to bend over all the time – other stuff. It's not like we don't like basketball games – we do, but despite all the goodness contained within *NBA 2K7*, it seems so intent on delivering the truest representation of the sport that the concentration it demands of the player will, after all the year-after-year iterations, seem to make the whole affair a tad stale – particularly if you've

already played the life out of *2K7* on the PS2 (or even *2K6* for that matter). So if you've got the last few *2K* rim rockers, spend your cash elsewhere when kicking off your PS3 library. But if you've only recently developed a craving for large spindly men who live to play with oversized balls, read on.

CHANNEL NBA 2K7

Despite the ESPN license getting swallowed up by EA Sports, the *2K* games still manages to emulate the professional presentation of the standard broadcast Friday night couch-a-thon. Lots of rocket-propelled intertitles, lots of "clever" metaphors from the square-toothed mic men, and of course plenty of replays that zoom in on sweating-like-cheese superstars. *2K7* keeps the yanky doddle cheese rolling; it's polished, it's slick, it's inviting.

If you know the bare minimum about basketball you can take to the court with a league leader like the Miami Heat and shoot a few buckets with Shaq and his



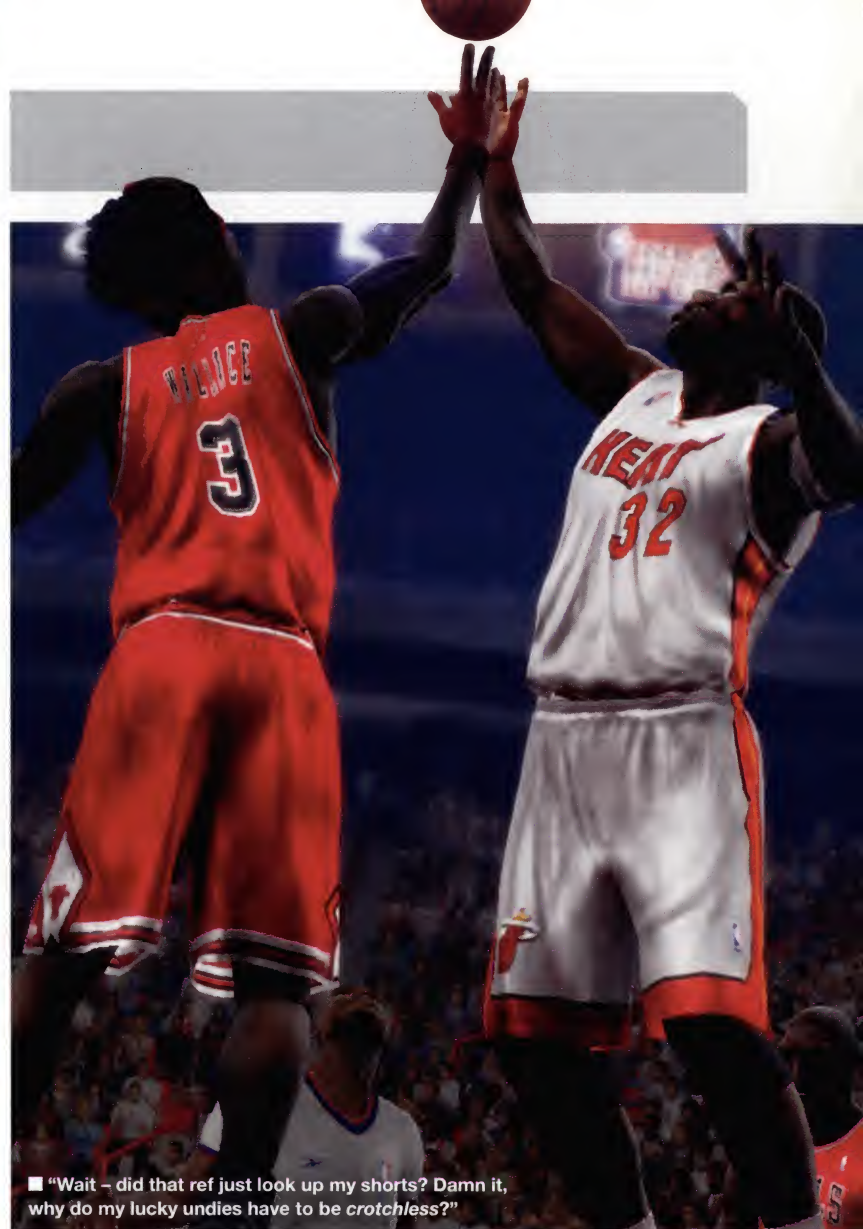
■ "You're sweating more than Mel Gibson at a bar mitzvah!"



■ "Yo, I got more blocks than a LEGO factory, fool!"



■ "Miss that lay-up and you're gonna be *laid off*" said the coach



■ "Wait – did that ref just look up my shorts? Damn it, why do my lucky undies have to be *crotchless*?"

"...if you're not prepared to learn the game's nuances you'll appreciate 2K7 like a hammer to the bollocks"

handlebar mo', despite knowing only how to shoot, pass, and change your player. But you'll get completely destroyed by the opposition on the scoreboard. If you want to get competitive you'll have to learn the game of basketball; how to call for picks, to post up under huge defenders, to wrestle for position of high percentage shots, and how to shoot those bloody free throws (see It's all in the wrist). If you know all this stuff anyway then you're good to go, but if you're not prepared to learn the game's nuances you'll appreciate 2K7 like a hammer to the bollocks. Sure there are dunks, alley oops, crossovers and other assorted razzle dazzle, but they don't come easy – (and let's say it together) "just like in the real thing". But the flipside is all this technicality can serve to immerse you into the game, prompting you to plan three-point plays with favoured outside shooters, making subs using the 'On The Fly' coaching, setting double teams, and other fandangled stuff.

HOW MANY WAYS TO WIN?

And it's all here to be played, whether you want to sink downtown bombs in a casual

game, or get the suit and tie on and play 'Association' head honcho. The stock standard Season, Street, and Tournament modes prove their worth online as well as off, scoring a quick three-point play right off the jump. The new 24:7 Next mode doesn't perform as well. Basically it allows you to create your own baller then shuffle them around at amateur tryouts in a bid to get the attention of the golden pens, like a dog putting out heat. Most of the time you'll be subjected to hacking your way through quick team games to 11 with your green player, or engaging in drawn out bouts of one-on-one. See Saw where both players have to sink a set number of shots in a row – it's all kinda like hauling a contestant from *The Biggest Loser* up a mountain. No, without all the top

tier hoopla, basketball just isn't the same, and the better looking the hoopla the more convincing the experience.

BLING IN THE RING

Alas, *NBA 2K7* is not the sort of game that'll convince your buddy to eBay his pants to raise funds for a PS3. You see *NBA 2K7* looks good, but with all the blandness that the word "good" has to offer. The game offers no poke in the eye, no wow factor, probably because it was developed cross platform. Player animations are good, particularly when you get two players posting up against each other, but the inconsistent character models (some of the player faces look photorealistic while others look as if they've been stung by a swarm of latex injecting wasps), texturing and lack of advanced shader tricks hurt. Where's the PS3 bling, dammit? We know the system can dunk much higher than this.

Despite the underwhelming visuals, *NBA 2K7* is fundamentalist basketball. It's staunch in its presentation of the game, but its execution is so money it's hard not to give it good wraps. **James Ellis**

PROS:

- Plays a hard-nosed game of b-ball
- Plenty of modes and online play

CONS:

- *Homecourt* is more accessible
- Not pretty enough

VERDICT: Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

IT'S ALL IN THE WRIST

The SIXAXIS motion-sensitivity makes its sporting debut at the free throw line. To perform a free throw you have to keep the controller straight, tip it back, then flick it forward at the point of release. A novel idea, unfortunately it's complete rubbish and comes close to wrecking the back end of each match. While the idea of using the motion sensitivity for the free throws is welcome, it's all too hard to get a shot in as it's anyone's guess when the player should flick the controller forward. Fortunately you can turn the feature off and rely on the shooter's stats. We like the idea of using the motion-sensor during play, but Visual Concepts has to go back to the drawing board.



OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE



The Ultimate Alliance has gone next gen and it's a beautiful thing

1 080p. Get used to reading that. You'll be seeing those numbers a lot in upcoming issues of the mag and when you see them you should know one thing – it means your eyeballs are in for a real treat.

The ocular equivalent of a steak dinner, foot massage and the amorous attentions of a comely wench. Point is – a game running at 1080p on a high def television looks about as good as a game has looked up to this point.

It was something of a surprise, then, when we heard that *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* (*M:UA*) was due for the 1080p

treatment. *M:UA* was a hoot – a fun brawler which featured a huge cast of Marvel superheros and took them around various environments known to the comic book savvy, and had your team of four whup pretty much every bad guy ever seen on the funny pages.

It was a good, fun game let down by some poor presentation, ropey graphics and stilted character animation.

I WAS BORN A POOR, GEEKY CHILD...

So, to be honest, we didn't expect all that much from the PS3 version. Same

game, slightly better graphics. And that's where 1080p comes in. Remember when you were a kid – hell, you might be a kid now – and you owned a bunch of action figures of your favourite superheroes or army men and such? Remember those lofty fantasies you'd sometimes indulge in – where your toys moved independent of your ministrations. Like *Toy Story* but with a lot more of the old ultra violence?

Imagine no more, because the PS3 port of *M:UA* looks that good. As if somehow a heaping helping of Marvel action figures (including a couple of additional characters to the next gen version) have come to life and fought a bunch of baddie action figures. And you control it all.

Now, don't get us wrong, the game itself is still pretty much the same but it looks so damn good, like ridiculously good, it actually manages to elevate itself a whole point. In the PS2 version sometimes there would be too many characters on screen and the action bogged down and you didn't know who was smacking what, where and how. Gone. In the PS2 version the characters' shadows and reflections, if they existed at all, were pretty primitive. Now it's almost like they're showing off. The previous blandness of some of the

locations, and feeling of repetition, has been excised due to the fact the lighting makes each new world and new level feel unique. The fighting is smooth as silk, each move comes out as it should, and the powers that started to get a tad samey in the PS2 *M:UA* – here are as unique as fingerprints.

A GAME WITH CHARACTER(S)

In the PS2 review we actually complained that there were too many characters to choose from. We suggested there were only seven or eight character types. We'd like to retract that statement for the PS3 version. Honestly, it's hard to get across just how good these heroes look. Example: Thing, from *The Fantastic Four*, the big orange rock guy. In the PS2 version he looked... like a big orange rock guy. Fine, nothing wrong with that. But in the PS3 version when bright light hits his rocky skin, you actually see a dimpled sheen in each rocky chunk. Need more? How about Daredevil – who was basically just red in the PS2 version – this time his leather outfit (if that's the one you choose for him) shines like real leather in the right light. Fire lights up the faces of hero and foe alike, shadows come in all forms and are accurate to whatever the





■ "That's right, ladies, they don't call me 'Stretch' 'cause I'm tall"

character is doing. It all feels so... correct. Every now and then you'll stop, move the – very functional – camera around the environment and go... wow.

CONTROLLER ROLLER

Sound is just as impressive as the visuals, with tracks ranging from big orchestral numbers to heavy metal guitar riffs depending on the level. All the interesting moments from the previous gen title are here – the ability to pick up new costumes for your heroes (that actually effect your powers, not just your aesthetic), the comic book missions (that you find in the form of discs, and can be played with just one character taking on a mission directly based on one of their comic book adventures) and, of course, the big boss fights.

In the PS2 version of *M:UA* the big boss fights usually consisted of staying out of the monster's way (say the Kraken or Galactus) until the game cued you up and let you press a series of buttons. To be honest it was far too easy, making the large, cool-looking bosses something of a doddle to put the beat down on.

For the PS3 you'll have to use the controller's motion-sensing skills. Turning your controller left, right, up, down, forwards and backwards in time to the on-screen prompts. It's a hell of a lot harder than memorising a series of button pushes and, though occasionally frustrating, you'll actually feel like you've accomplished something.

WHAT IF I'M NOT A GEEK?

You don't have to be a hardcore comic fan to love *M:UA* – it's basically *Baldur's Gate* with super powers and now – at least in the PS3 version – graphics that will make you drool and gibber. The impressively long (about 15 hours on normal), if rather simplistic mission, remains, plus you have the comic book missions for every character – even some of the baddies!

Co-operative play is awesome, especially if your team of four can be manned by four actual people (either in the same room or over the net using multiplayer) and thanks to the automatic upgrade option you don't have to spend hours spending points on character's

powers – although if that's your thing, you can do it manually.

M:UA was a diamond in the rough on the PS2. It featured a bunch of unlockables and multiple endings and twists that would lead you to want to play again, but slightly ordinary presentation generally put the kibosh on that. However at 1080p you'll want to play this again and again. This diamond has been polished and it's ever so shiny.

If hectic dungeon crawler launch titles like this look as good as they do for the PS3 – what are we going to be playing in a year? Exciting times ahead, readers, *really* exciting. **Anthony O'Connor**

PS3 BONUS CONTENT

As if the huge cast of characters in *M:UA* wasn't enough, the PS3 gets two more! First Colossus – he of the X-Men – who can turn his body into steel, break stuff and throw Wolverine at enemies. It really is too cool for school.

Then there's the lesser known chap – Moon Knight. Moony has a long and convoluted history, but all that should matter to you is that he has a staff, crescent-shaped blades and is a very tidy fighter. He, like all the characters in the game, comes with a variety of outfits and powers unique to those outfits. And when the game looks this good it really does make a difference. On a side note four additional characters are apparently going to be available for the PSP version (Hawkeye, Ronin, Black Widow and Captain Marvel). Can't wait!



■ "Yo, Iron-spud, you're firing at empty floor. Time to get your targeting computer checked again"



INFO BYTE

There's nothing wrong with the PS2 version, it's still a fun game, but the sheer visual poetry of the PS3 version makes it like a moving, airbrushed comic book. Bravo, Activision!

■ "Time to hammer this pair of clowns!"



■ Super snowflakes? Was she sick the day they handed out powers?



■ Naked Amazon chicks? Activision finally took our suggestions seriously



PROS:

- It's an insanely beautiful game
- PS2 issues have been fixed

CONS:

- Played the PS2 version to death
- You don't like super heroes

VERDICT: It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must have!

OFFICIAL SCORE:

09

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** EA REDWOOD SHORES
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA SPORTS

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
 ■ **PRICE:** TBC
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
 ■ **WEB:** www.easports.com

■ **BACK STORY:** EA has been knocking out annual sports titles for years, usually updating its franchises just enough to warrant new purchases. But you already knew that. This time 'round it's the turn of *Tiger Woods*, making its very welcome debut on the PS3.



■ **Funny looking gallery – where do they hang the paintings?**
 [Oh, you are so fired for that – Ed.]



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07



Worth your hard-earned skins?

Tiger Woods is the richest sportsman on the planet, and buying the latest *PGA Tour* game will only put more dollars into his pocket. For that reason alone we'd probably rather dropkick him in the face and steal his wallet than contribute to his monumental earnings. The bad news however, with regards to *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07*, is that you might just have to go ahead and buy the damn thing, because the latest game in EA's seminal sports franchise is quite possibly one of the best golf titles ever made, and an extremely solid launch game to boot.

KEEPING IT REAL

We'll get the obvious stuff out of the way first: *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* looks dazzling. Besides a few slightly blurry looking textures, which bizarrely results in the grass looking better the closer you are to it, the scenery looks fantastic, especially on a high definition set. You will almost have yourself convinced that someone has airlifted you directly into St Andrews, Sawgrass, or any other world famous course you choose to play on.

The players themselves are realistic to the extent that we don't know whether to be hugely impressed, or thoroughly creeped out.

One of the things, however, that impressed us the most was *Tiger Woods'* use of sound. Despite the fact that golf games have previously had little audio outside of a couple of chirping birds here and there, EA has utilised 5.1 surround sound in an attempt to really immerse gamers. The result is a relaxing, chilled atmosphere that really represents the sport of golf. Sounds from the gallery, and the speech from the golfers themselves are also top notch, all adding to the overall experience.

Thankfully, this overall experience is an extremely in-depth and engaging one, largely due to a control system that is subtle,



■ "Wait, sand wedge or three wood? Man, I really shouldn't have fired that caddy..."



■ "You call this a fairway? Damn it. I knew I shouldn't have boned the greenskeeper's daughter..."



■ "Can't... hold... it! Man, this queue for the toilets is crazy long! I'm gonna make a water hazard in my pants!"



■ "Check it out – I swapped Tiger's ball with one of those exploding joke balls..." BOOOM! "Golfer down! Repeat, GOLFER DOWN!"

INFO BYTE

At 30 years old, Tiger Woods has already won 12 majors and is the youngest player in golfing history to make 50 official PGA Tour wins. You're the man, Tiger!



■ "Check it out! I laid an egg!"

responsive and accessible. The controls work similarly to previous instalments in the franchise, with some interesting twists. The left analogue stick is used to set your stance and aim, while the right stick is utilised for the swing itself. Happily, this method of control has yet to wear thin, and is still extremely responsive, allowing players to add fade or draw to their shots with ease.

BE THE BALL

There are, however, some new excellently implemented updates to the control system that enables *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* to play more realistically than before, adding a layer of depth which improves the franchise significantly. The most important of these updates, the 'true aiming system', attempts to remove the old method of pinpoint aiming in previous golf games. Now budding golfers have a circle on the screen to aim towards, which starts out large when you begin, and your golfer has less control over where the strike will land. As you play and gain skill through training and experience however, this circle gradually reduces in size, directly simulating the increased control golfers gain through mastery of technique.

Its an interesting feature, and one more relevant to the hackers around the world that throw temper tantrums every time a well aimed shot floats into the bunker because, well... they're totally crap at golf. It increases the game's difficulty, but also introduces a

rewarding learning curve that fans of the franchise will appreciate.

Another interesting control innovation is the use of the PS3's SIXAXIS motion-sensing controller, which allows players to control the spin of the ball by angling the controller in the desired direction. The same effect could be attained in previous PGA games by tapping buttons, but this method is of course, a helluva lot slicker, and infinitely more fun.

WAY OFF COURSE

Ironically, the only thing that lets *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* down slightly is what didn't make it into the game. While the previous PS2 version of this *PGA Tour* had a total of 21 courses, the PS3 version has a slimmed down 12. And although we accept the fact that the control and graphical updates more than make up for such a loss, the PS3's Blu-ray disc has over 50GB of storage: for the love of sweet jeebus, use the thing – fill that bad boy up to the brim!

On the other hand, there are so many options in the game that it's difficult to

justify any complaint regarding the range of options. The amount of game types in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* is almost overwhelming, with a prodigious list featuring (deep breath...) match play, stroke play, skins, alternate shot, best ball, Tiger Challenge, Fed Ex Career mode, and, our own personal favourite, battle golf. This, regrettably, does not allow you to pit Vijay Singh and John Daly in a brutal duel to the death, instead allowing you to steal an important club out of your opponents golf bag every time you win a hole during a round of match play. Its an interesting innovation, adding spice to what is a standard game type in golf sims.

Essentially, a lot of effort went into making this game what it is: the best golf game available on any format. Anyone interested in any sort of 'fore-play' (horrible pun, just horrible...), even non-golfers, will enjoy this *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* immensely. Its an in-depth, totally satisfying gaming experience that will continually have you coming back for one more round. **▬ Mark Serrels**

C'MON, SHOW US YOUR GAME FACE!

Tiger Woods, Colin Montgomerie (shudder...) and a host of other golfers now look freakily realistic in *Tiger 07*, thanks to EA's new UCAP (Universal Capture) technology. After having roughly 30 little microchip sensor thingies glued to his face, EA recorded almost all of Tiger's subtle facial movements before transferring them onto the 3D model, created via a head scan. The results are so realistic its creepy, seriously; we're still having nightmares about Colin Montgomerie's grotesque facial features. That gummy smile... those cold dead eyes...that white boy afro, blowing ominously in the wind...ARRRRGGHHH *wakes up in cold sweat*.



PROS:

- Best golf game money can buy
- Realistic new control method

CONS:

- Less courses than PS2 version
- You hate golf

VERDICT: A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** VISUAL CONCEPTS
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** TAKE 2

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (2-8 ONLINE)
 ■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
 ■ **WEB:** www.2ksports.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Ice hockey games started their herculean rise to fame back on 16-bit systems via EA's *NHL* series. They've often been considered the perfect sport for translation into a videogame as ice hockey is packed with action and biff while lacking complicated rules.

PlayStation
**BRONZE
 AWARD**
 8/10

NHL 2K7

These guys love getting sweaty and 'body checking' each other



■ "In Kazakhstan, we play hockey with sticks and small dog as puck..."

Who the hell buys ice hockey games down here anyway? Bet your bottom dollar, most of what Australians know about ice hockey was passed down by that divine herald Emilio Estevez and his Mighty Ducks. Thanks to those cheeseballs the only strategies we know for ice hockey are the Flying V and that fat kid's slap shot that can rocket the length of the ice. Despite that, the ratio of hockey to cricket and rugby games released here still weighs heavily in favour of the game on ice. While

that's obviously because they've trickled off from the huge US market, it's also because the videogame sport has been honed to a bullseye over the last 14 years or so and has dragged with it a trust fund of vid hookers. This build up has led us to exhibit A: (insert trumpet tooting sound) *NHL 2K7*, no doubt the best hockey experience available from the kings of the ring, court, rink, and anything else remotely related to sport, Visual Concepts.

Of course it's already out on PS2, and, perhaps most disappointingly, the

improvements in this next-gen version are far from killer – scratch that – they're far from noticeable. Like *NBA 2K7*, this game seems to have been renovated over old code in a bid to pump it out across a bunch of systems quickly. Accept this and you're free to take *NHL 2K7* on its own merits – where it shines.

ICE, ICE BABY

NHL 2K7 has got more pace and energy than a midget stalker. Even if you think "changing lines" refers to some sort of



■ "Man, my balls are freezing! Damn it, why do my lucky undies have to be crotchless?!"



■ We like our hockey rinks like we like our drinks – full of ice (and, uh... whiskey)



■ "Hey Mike – check out his body! I mean, uh... body check him... Phew, I think I got away with that..."



■ "Wow, you handle the stick nicely. Wanna go out sometime?"

"... it's got more pace and energy than a midget streaker"

hooch swap you're still able to have a fast-paced riot of a time by switching the game into Arcade or Physical mode. Here it's less about strategy and more about brute encounters with puffing eastern Europeans and breakaway Canucks, with the game moving at a cracking pace as you crunch attackers and pass the puck around like a nude photo of your girlfriend.

It's even fun to play defense with the game's 'Crease Control' feature allowing you to control your team's goaltender at the push of a button. While goalie duties have historically fallen to fat kids whose legs rub together when they run, Visual Concepts has made being the goalie one of the coolest spots on the ice (pun intended) by using the SIXAXIS's motion sensor to great effect. As goalie you have a cone that's controlled by the motion sensor and tells you if you're in the optimum position. When a shot is made on goal, time slows down and you have a brief moment to use the motion sensor to line up your target over the puck's destination and press the save button. It's a bit fiddly to start with, but once you've got your co-ordination up to speed it's more fun than branding your mate's skin marbles with a golf ball.

ICE TO MEET YOU

Not to let the goalie bag all the tail, your other players have a few new tricks, too. Most notable is the new 'Enforcer system' that allows you to pick a fella on the other team and have one of your AI guys hound him, double team him, or take him down to the subzero basement with a full-speed body check – just for the hell of it. It's not the sort of feature that'll have you ripping your clothes off and pressing up on your bedroom window with your PS3's AV cables dangling around your genitals, but when you use it during a raid on goal and see their net bulge you do get a warm fuzzy feeling inside that prompts you to at least take off your shirt. Speaking of scoring (a favourite topic of ours after a few Coronas), it's worth noting for punters that you'll find the back of the net more

often if you change to manual shooting and use the new 'Pro control', which is basically icon passing. Write that down.

PUCKIN' GREAT

Once you're confident you've got what it takes to make slush puppies out of all and sundry, it's time to get your Happy Gilmore out and jump into every foreseeable game configuration available. Online play is, of course, here – and in spades. Quick games, tournaments, leagues – all available online or off – and the franchise mode (similar to *NBA 2K7*'s 'Association' mode) is here for those who ever thought playing games like *Football Manager* was fun (we know it doesn't seem like it, but you need to see a doctor).

So there you have it. With bed-rocking gameplay for novices or pros alike, plenty of game modes, savvy use of the SIXAXIS's motion-sensor and of the system's online capabilities, and every thinkable option able to be tweaked, *NHL 2K7* is quite the package. The only thing to consider is that due to the pious predictability of developer Visual Concept, *NHL 2K8* will also, no doubt, be quite the tidy package – plus should look a whole lot better than this first-generation flag planter. We recommend you wait till next year if you can, but if you're mad for hockey and need something, now, now, now – go out and own this puppy. **James Ellis**

FAMOUS ICE HOCKEY STARS ON SCREEN

We wouldn't know ice hockey existed without these sterling ambassadors of the sport. Here are the top five film hockey players:

1. Happy Gilmore – Before he was a golfer, he was a completely rubbish ice hockey player.
2. Gordon Bombay (Emilio Estevez from *The Mighty Ducks*) – Before Emilio was a doorman in Mexico, he was an actor.
3. Mickey Mouse – all that skating on ice, don't tell us he's not knocking a puck around every now and then.
4. Rob Lowe – Back in the '80s before he got busted for slapshotting a minor on video, Rob Lowe starred in a slick ice hockey film called *Youngblood*.
5. MacGyver – Everyone's favourite man scout was obsessed with hockey on his '80s show – like Richard Dean in real life.



PROS:

- Speedy, puck-chuckin' fun
- Nice motion-sensor usage

CONS:

- *NHL 2K8* will likely be sexier
- You prefer air hockey

VERDICT: A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

INFO BYTE

They barely mention it in the manual, but flicking the SIXAXIS at an opposing player will cause them to go for a check thanks to the motion-sensor. Whammy!



■ "Hey ladies? I'm the goal tender. I wanna show you some goal tenderness..." "Boo! You suck, goalie!"



■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE:** TBC 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** EA TIBURON
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
 ■ **PRICE:** TBC
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
 ■ **WEB:** www.easports.com

■ **BACK STORY:** It really is no surprise that EA has nailed American Football with the *Madden* franchise. After all, EA has released annual updates for the franchise since 1991, plus all of the college football games released only in the US and the various *NFL Street* titles.



■ "Go long! Go long!" shouted a frustrated Hugh Hefner, all out of Viagra

MADDEN 07

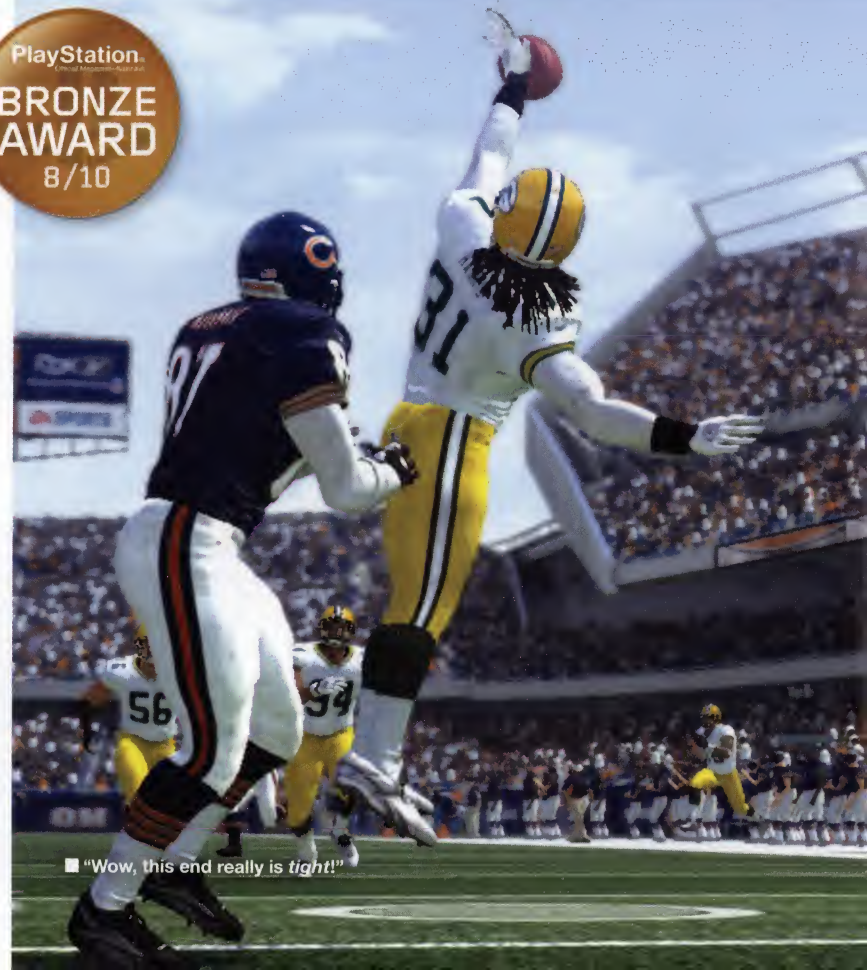
Go the hard yards...

There's simply nothing more intrinsically Australian, more Dinki-Di than...that's right! You guessed it... American Football. Aussies and the NFL go together like Chinese food and chocolate pudding. Wait, that's not right...like cocaine and waffles, like peanut butter and ladies. Okay. You got us. Those things don't really go together at all, do they? (Well, the last one could be fun) But hell, just cause they don't traditionally go together, it don't mean you can't enjoy it now, does it? Course not! Well buckle up your taste buds for a traditional slice of Americana, with all the

trimmings and cheese you could ask for. Welcome to *Madden NFL 07*.

A BIT OF MOM AND APPLE PIE

Though ridiculously popular in the States, it's no tremendous surprise that the *Madden* series has never really taken off here. Most Australians find American Football confusing and are not huge fans of the stop-start style of play. Ask them what a 'blitz' is and you'll probably elicit a response like, "something to do with prices at Lowes?" Discussions on what a 'tight end' is and does took us perilously close



■ "Wow, this end really is tight!"



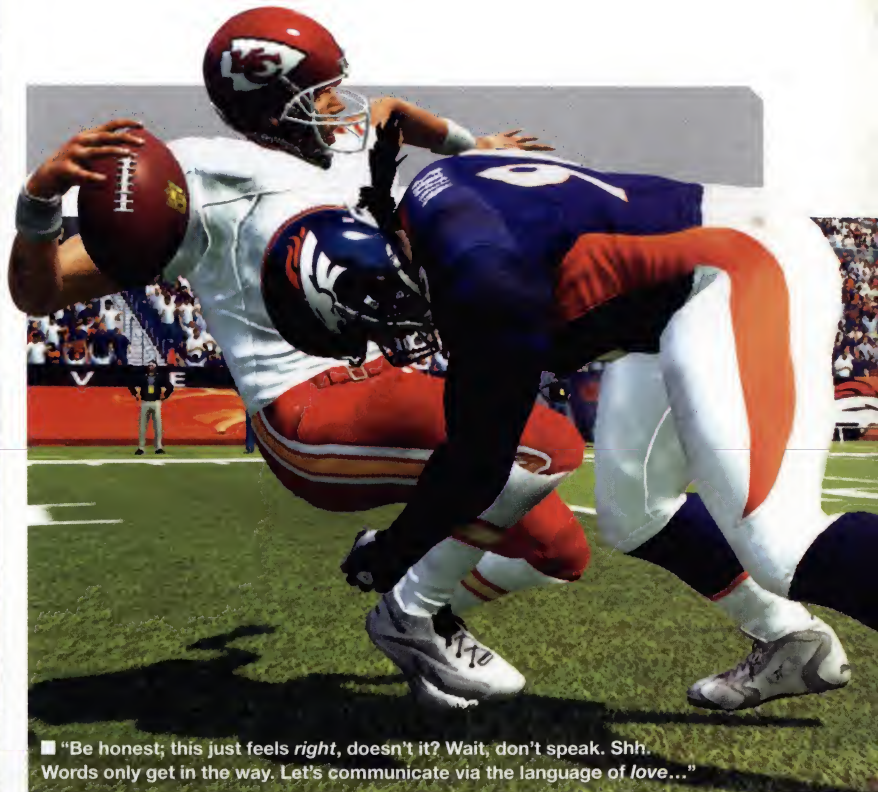
■ "Stop him! He's about to penetrate our end zone!"
 "Oh, not again. I thought that was behind me ever since I got out of prison..."



■ Does it worry anyone else that the tights on the players are more snug than the leggings on the cheerleaders? No?



■ "Dude, you can't join in on my touchdown dance!?! You're on the other team!"



■ "Be honest; this just feels *right*, doesn't it? Wait, don't speak. Shh. Words only get in the way. Let's communicate via the language of love..."

to the realm of Frewski. They've compared NFL to chess on a football field. Well relax your noggin, readers. There's no need to stress. EA has come to the party, and made it feel and play easy, and still look incredible while you do it.

There are a few modes of play to muck around with, though Superstar and Franchise are definitely the most enjoyable and rewarding. In Superstar you create your own player and guide him from draft pick to Super bowl Champion. It even includes several training camps to see if you cut the mustard. The level of customisation is ridiculous. Not only can you pick your parents (who hasn't wanted to do that?), you can even check into their lineage and background for inherent traits you might wish your player to have.

Franchise lets you have the run of a team for up to thirty seasons if you want. This mode has several similarities to those soccer manager styled games, without detracting from the gameplay. You sign and trade players, work within a salary cap and can even have your season dramatically affected by injuries to star players, all randomly generated of course.

Both modes use the same plays, with the main difference, obviously, that one focuses on the individual, and the other, the team. In terms of how the actual game plays out, the basic moves are the same.

BLUE 32! BLUE 32!! HUTT! HUTT! HUUUUUUUUUUUTT!

While we'll grudgingly admit that the wealth of plays and options available to you on both the offensive and defensive ends are remarkable, they're also a little daunting and overwhelming at first. But after a game or two you'll be playing like a Conference champion and already practising your end zone celebrations.

Regardless of which end of the field you're at, a sub menu will come up with a huge roster of plays to choose from. On the defensive, you've got all manner of coverage. Man to man, blitzes, and mixes of the two. If you're finding yourself stuck, or a little lost, there's a bunch of hints to get you through. You can ask the coach of your team for

INFO BYTE

Once you connect online, various scores from the NBA, NFL and NHL scroll across the bottom of the menu screens, with live updates from matches as they occur! Never leave the couch again!



a play, or you can always go straight for the big guns. That's right! Just ask the man himself, John Madden. He'll serenade you with his southern drawl, and give you all the advice you need. What we really like is that he not only offers you a solution, but also gives you the reasoning behind why that type of play is suitable for your current situation. We're partial to running extended blitzes, with a little extra coverage, just in case. There's something incredibly satisfying about repeatedly sacking the quarterback, and forcing your opposition to punt.

On offence, it's a whole different bag baby! You've got tonnes of plays to choose from. You can run pass plays, hand offs, rushes, play fakes... the list is huge! You can even choose a specific wide receiver or running back, and run personalised plays for them, directly from the arsenal of their

real life counterpart! Now, how cool is that!

Once you've snapped the ball all your play options become available to you by having each of your receivers allocated a button (X, O, B and so on) as they move down field. Now, you can't just throw up a Hail Mary and expect a touchdown every single time. It's all about timing. Fire off a bullet pass and race downfield pulling off spin moves and fending off tacklers with your own version of shake 'n' bake! If you're miles ahead of a defender, your guy will start showboating for the crowd and spike the ball with gusto. Nothing like a little on-field humiliation, we always say.

Madden NFL 07 has got a lot to offer. An energetic, engrossing sports sim with immense replay ability, a well-rounded play system, frenzied crowds and most importantly... it's a whole bunch of fun to play! **♣ Dave Kozicki**

THE SIXAXIS OF FOOTBALL

Though a bit rushed and feeling tacked on, *Madden NFL 07* gives you some motion-sensor options at both ends of the field. On defence, a deft flick towards your opponent gives you a crunching tackle. On offence, you can use the controller to fake snaps as the quarterback to try and grab a cheap flag on the play. You can even use it to position blockers and clear a path for your running backs, though it does require precision movements. EA really could have given it a little more polish, but we'll give it points for heading in the right direction.



PROS:

- You're a Yank
- You love NFL

CONS:

- Err... what's an "NFL"?
- You prefer other football codes

VERDICT: Visually polished, tactically deep and plenty of fun – *Madden* still rules the NFL roost.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

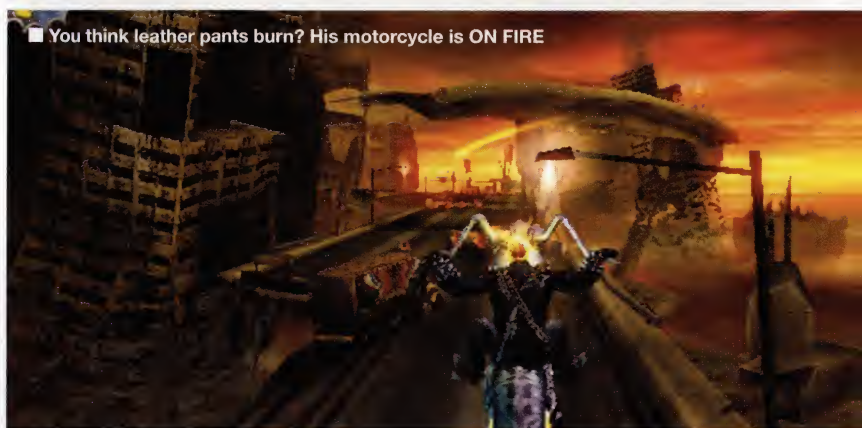
PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION/RACING
■ **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.2kgames.com/ghost rider

■ **BACK STORY:** It's no real surprise that Climax knows its way around a bit of two wheel racing action. It has had plenty of experience with numerous *Moto GP* titles on PC and other consoles, *SX Superstar* on PS2 and four-wheeled antics like *ATV Offroad Fury 3* and 4.

■ Alice in Chains. Not pictured: Alice



GHOST RIDER



Let he who is without sin... Kick the first ass!

When you invest as much time and effort playing and researching games as we do, it's a rarity that a game catches you completely off guard. It's even rarer that we are completely floored and almost in a state of shock over a game. Now before you go checking the title and start thinking this is a massive typo or editing mistake, we are talking about *Ghost Rider*. No, we haven't lost our minds. No, we're not on drugs. We're just a little amazed that a movie tie-in could actually be something worth playing, as opposed to something worth wiping our arses with. We were just

about to stack *Ghost Rider* next to our copies of *Bad Boys* and *Charlie's Angels* in the Men's Room at the newly christened OPS towers. Then something funny happened. We played it. We liked it. It was good. Damn good. It was almost good enough to convince us to check out the film. Almost.

Ghost Rider is your run of the mill tale about a guy, Johnny Blaze, who sells his soul to the Devil to save his father from eternal damnation. Unfortunately, he was in such a rush he didn't take the time to read the fine print, and the Devil, being the shiftiest bastard that he is, neglected to mention a





■ Remember Boney M? Ghost Rider would totally kill them too

INFO BYTE

Grizzled actor Sam Elliott plays the role of narrator in the game. He also narrated *The Big Lebowski*, which is one of the OPS crew's favourite movies.



■ Little known Ghost Rider fact? CRAZY road rage...



■ "Here, let me unchain your heart! Hmmm... not a Joe Cocker fan?"

few small points. Like whenever injustice occurs, Johnny Blaze transforms into an avenging demon, clad in incredibly flame resistant leathers, armed with a shotgun spouting hellfire, a chain to wrap around evil doers throats and sporting the latest in flaming skull hairdos. Did we forget to tell you about his ride? It's the original Harley from hell, and does everything a normal bike can and has a couple of optional extras. Like, the handy wheels of fire, which may be a bitch to change when flat, but boy howdy, do they look cool! They've also included the all new Hansel and Gretel GPS feature where your tracks are actually fiery burn marks in the road trailing behind you, so even if you don't know where you're going, you know where you've been.

GHOST OF WAR

After about the first thirty or so seconds of playing *Ghost Rider* you'll notice something

a little familiar. You get your bearings, survey the scene, and realise you're deep in the bowels of hell. After you dispatch the first dozen or so enemies, various nefarious demons and what not, you get a strong sense of déjà vu. The combat bears more than a passing similarity to the action masterpiece, *God Of War*. As the Rider, you'll have a veritable smorgasbord of kick ass moves at your disposal to send the spawn of Satan back to... err... Satan. This is far from a button-mashing affair. The amount of combinations is extensive and uses both your fists and hellfire chains. As you'd expect, you gain more points for using a variety of moves, and why wouldn't you? You've got uppercuts, dives, the usual "beat you like you stole something" one-two punch combos, and all manner of mid-air, spinning acrobatics with your chains, which not only look the bomb, but deal some heavy damage as well. We particularly like the grabs. After weakening a demon, you'll



■ "Oooh, a penny!" SLASH!



■ Flaming rings. The Devil gives them to you. So does Indian food



■ Brutal. The morning after Indian food

be prompted to press **○**. Your chains snake out to grab your victim and whip him back to you. Without skipping a beat you launch yourself and pile drive the sorry son of a bitch into the ground, as the camera circles around you in slow-mo ala *The Matrix*.

If that isn't enough, you've got a shotgun that shoots blazing hellfire buckshot to boot! You gain ammo for the shotty by gathering souls from your newly departed enemies, and absorbing them using **□**, which is also used to block. You can also use them as currency to gain new moves and various other upgrades. When you've got the maximum, you can hit **△** and inflict your Penance Stare on your would-be foes. It basically gives you a major boost to strength, defence and damage for a short period. Hitting **○** transforms demon souls to spirits and pretty much lays waste to anything unfortunate enough to be in the immediate vicinity.

ON THE HIGHWAY TO HELL

Now it ain't all fisticuffs and S&M. As we previously mentioned, you've got the ride from hell, and we're not talking about sex with Pauline Hanson. To mix it up, after a couple of brawls, you get to kick some demon butt with a little racing element to it. This usually involves the simple task of navigating your way over ridiculously huge jumps, shooting respawning demons, using your chains to take out other easy riders on your tail and the occasional bosses, sliding underneath closing gates (which looks absolutely awesome) and at the same time, somehow concentrating on where you're going. In the later stages your fingers get a little tied up with one another, but hell, that's all part of the fun now, isn't it? **♣ Dave Kozicki**

WRITE ON TRACK

Contrary to most of the drivel associated with comic and movie inspired games, *Ghost Rider* has a couple of heavyweights in its corner and they ain't pulling any punches. Namely Garth Ennis and Jimmy Palmiotti. Garth Ennis penned *The Darkness* in his usual "hammer to the face" style, while Jimmy Palmiotti worked with Kevin Smith on revamping *Daredevil*. Not the crap film adaptation starring Ben Affleck as a crime fighting block of wood, but the kick ass comic that made a resurgence from the fringe back into the mainstream. We've gotta admit though, Affleck was the bomb in *Phantoms*...



PROS:

- You can't wait for *God of War II*
- You're a comic book guy

CONS:

- You can wait for *God of War III*
- You prefer crap movie tie-ins

VERDICT: Fun and frantically paced, *Ghost Rider* is the goods. Far better than its budget price suggests.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

■ **GENRE:** RETRO COMPILATION
■ **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 480p
■ **WEB:** www.capcom.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Capcom has a proud tradition of producing hit titles that it has maintained for over two decades. The *Capcom Classics Collection* series revives some of its greats of yesteryear, and this is the series' second release.

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL. 2

Capcom brews up another round of retrogaming. Are you up?

Like the previous compilation, *Capcom Classics Collection Vol. 2* provides an excellent spread of classic titles across a number of genres, with a great representation of shoot 'em ups, beat 'em ups, platformers and fighting games. Around three quarters of the titles remain as playable today as the day they came out, and this iteration includes what is widely accepted as the best version of *Street Fighter II*; *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*. Still, there are a few dead weights like the original *Street Fighter* (shudder), *Tiger Road* and *Avengers*, and several other titles that are merely mediocre.

The first CCC got a little nerfed in the PAL conversion, and only had the standard 50 Hz option, and as a result, slight 'letterboxing' and reduced game speeds.

This took down the pace and intensity a notch (a key factor of the arcade games). Luckily, CCC2 corrects this mistake and then some. This time around you get a much needed 60 Hz option for faithful recreations of the original games, as well as a luscious Progressive Scan option for all of you that have already splashed out on a High Def setup for your PS3.

While the feature made it into CCC *Reloaded* on PSP, the option to save your progress mid-game is new to PS2. Some of these older games can have heaps of stages and take quite some time to play through, so the option to save and get back into it later on is a great addition.

Most unlockables like game tips, artwork and soundtracks are made available by making progress in their respective games, but you can also unlock additional cheats

by playing the Capcom Quiz. It's basically a modified version of *Quiz and Dragons* with questions about Capcom's entire range of games. Ironically, these game-based questions make for a much more enjoyable game than the original *Quiz and Dragons*.

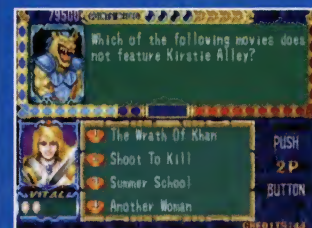
Another of the added features is a series of *Street Fighter II* instructional videos by Digital Eclipse employee, game theorist and fighting game champion, Dave Sirlin. Each of the three videos contains sage advice and tips to improve your skills, and the info supplied carries weight for all fighting games, not just SF2.

With over 20 of Capcom's titles from arcade history across a range of genres, as well as a fantastic lineup of features for a compilation, *Capcom Classics Collection Vol. 2* is an easy buy for 50 bucks. **Nick O'Shea**

IN THE MIX

When it comes down to brass tacks, the most important piece of information you need when it comes to purchasing a games compilation is obviously the list of games it includes. Without further ado, here's CCC2's roster of titles.

1941, Avengers, Black Tiger, Block Block, Captain Commando, Eco Fighters, King of Dragons, Knights of the Round, Last Duel, Magic Sword, Mega Twins, Quiz & Dragons, Side Arms, Street Fighter, Strider, Super Street Fighter II Turbo, The Speed Rumbler (aka Rush 'N Crash), Three Wonders, Tiger Road, and Varth.



PROS:

- A quality collection of classic titles
- Some great features and options

CONS:

- The same as the PSP games
- Some games are sub par

VERDICT: Another solid retro game collection, even if there is some overlap with the portable versions.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

07

are you one?

gameplayer.com.au



■ **GENRE:** PLATFORM
 ■ **RELEASE:** NOW
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** TECMO
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** TAKE 2

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
 ■ **PRICE:** \$29.95
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 576i
 ■ **WEB:** www.tecmogames.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Developer Tecmo has been around since the videogame industry was in its infancy, producing numerous smash hit arcade games such as *Ninja Gaiden* and *Rygar*. *Tokobot Plus* is the PS2 follow up to a PSP game released in 2006.



■ Not to be confused with *Tokerbot*, the Rastafarian cyborg



■ "Hard boiled? I specifically asked for my giant egg to be scrambled! YARGH!"

TOKOBOT PLUS: MYSTERIES OF THE KARAKURU

Cutesy robot platformer lets you "joint" like never before!

God bless the Japanese and their obsession with transforming robots. It has led to imaginative titles like, well, *Transformers*, and now *Tokobot Plus: Mysteries of the Karakuru*. Much like the first outing on PSP, you play as Bolt, a young 16 year-old with dreams of a name-change as soon as he's legally empowered, and a love of unearthing ancient technologies on his quest to become a 'treasure master'. In order to discover the trinkets hidden throughout the land and to defeat their many guardians, you enlist the help of the Tokobots: small droids whose only joy is to re-configure themselves (or "joint") in different formations so that you may climb, jump, swing or bash the living daylights out of something else. You'll earn more of these handy little dudes as the storyline progresses, and you'll definitely be thankful that they're along for the ride.

Each boss you encounter and defeat

will unlock new overdrive abilities for you and your bots, and before long they'll be doing much more than making handy ladders – they'll be morphing into far more helpful things like giant cannons and super tanks.

There are 10 different levels to explore, and although this title may look like it's aimed at the younger gamer, there is still a fair amount of challenge involved. However, character and level design are both very similar to the PSP original, so if you're looking for an update worth buying for your PSP, you may want to think long and hard before shelling out for this one.

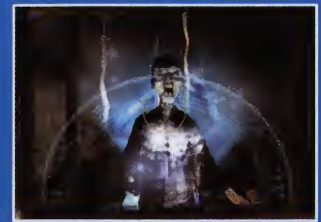
All the puzzles are pretty well put together, and the tutorial will have you going in no time, but all that can mean nothing if you can't see what you're doing. Once again we found *Tokobot's* camera needs a good slap in the head! You'll often find your view obscured by a tree or pillar, and when you're looking for

a way out or a cunning angle for attack, you may well just end up making sounds like "grrr" or "errgh" instead (or even worse: we've been known to yell out "sugar" at fairly regular intervals).

There's little doubt that *Tokobot Plus* has a fairly original gameplay mechanic, and while there are some new revisions over the PSP version, it is hardly taxing on the PS2's processor, and much of it looks like a badly animated Saturday morning cartoon (you know, the little-known ones they have on before the really good ones start? Not that we watch them ourselves. We're far too busy for those sort of shenanigans... Ahem. Cough.) While there are some good moments to be had, after a while the game seems very samey and repetitive, and the biggest challenge might end up being how many different curses you can hurl at that uncooperative camera! (We came up with 438). **Chris Dzelde**

PROJECT CUTE

Gaming guru Keisuke Kikuchi has worked on both of the *Tokobot* games, and was previously responsible for the PS2 pants-wetter *Project Zero*, a game that featured a protagonist with only a camera as a weapon in order to capture the souls of various ghosts and demons. It was an effective exercise in survival-horror that gained critical success and two sequels, *Project Zero 2: Crimson Butterfly* and *Project Zero 3: The Tormented*. So to find him now in the world of cute, transforming Tokobots is possibly the biggest career change since Bill Clinton's cigar incident.



■ Their favourite dance? The 'robot', of course – they totally invented it!



PROS:

- You liked the PSP original
- Gameplay is unique and different

CONS:

- You hated the PSP original
- Cute robots make you uneasy

VERDICT: Puzzle-solving fun for the younger gamer, but has a tendency to frustrate.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

06

dbm™

MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT

NO SUBSCRIPTIONS, NO CONS

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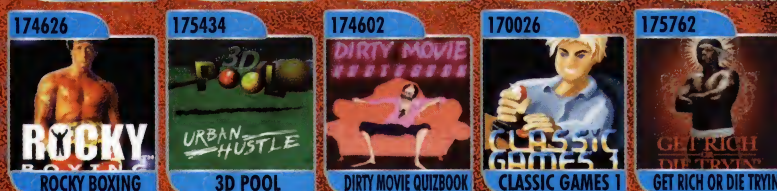
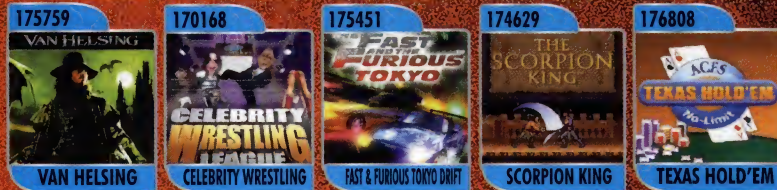
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ANIMATIONS



RINGTONES

CHART	TRUE	FULL	POLY	FAVOURITES	TRUE	FULL	POLY
IRREPLACEABLE.....	173335	173342	171811	ALL THE SMALL THINGS.....	178549	177521	-----
LIGHT SURROUNDING YOU.....	173337	-----	171813	SWEET CHILD O MINE.....	178709	177706	172138
SMACK THAT.....	173450	-----	171839	WONDERWALL.....	178906	177784	171056
FERGALICIOUS.....	173586	173590	171882	CALIFORNICATION.....	178943	177827	-----
MY LOVE.....	173362	173363	171823	YOU CANT TOUCH THIS.....	178824	177611	171171
WIND IT UP.....	173592	173602	171884	GHETTO GOSPEL.....	178476	172477	171286
ROCK THIS PARTY.....	173314	173320	171801	BACK IN BLACK.....	178495	177492	-----
I DON'T FEEL LIKE DANCING.....	173243	173247	171772	BLACK BETTY.....	178212	177825	-----
TOO LITTLE TOO LATE.....	173546	173552	171877	ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST.....	178925	-----	172039
PUT YOUR HANDS UP FOR DETRIOT.....	173345	173352	171815				
I WISH I WAS A PUNK ROCKER.....	177603	177608	171661	REAL SOUNDS			FULL
NIGHT OF MY LIFE.....	173585	-----	171881	NAPOLEON DYNAMITE - FREAKING IDIOT.....	177920	-----	177920
WELCOME TO THE BLACK PARADE.....	173304	173328	171796	ALIENS - GAME OVER MAN.....	177921	-----	177921
U & UR HAND.....	173245	173249	171774	HAPPY GILMORE - GO HOME BALL.....	177923	-----	177923
JOKER & THE THIEF.....	173372	-----	171831	SCARFACE - SAY HELLO TO MY LITTLE FRIEND.....	177924	-----	177924
SEXY BACK.....	173216	173222	171756	THE SHINING - HERE'S JOHNNY!!.....	177925	-----	177925
				THE GREATEST FEMALE ORGASM EVER!!.....	178031	-----	178031
HIP HOP				DARTH VADER.....	177300	-----	177300
IN DA CLUB.....	178479	177483	171071	FLINTSTONES.....	177302	-----	177302
GANGSTAS PARADISE.....	178617	177590	171027	FORREST GUMP.....	177303	-----	177303
YOU CAN DO IT.....	178198	177714	171170	GODFATHER.....	177304	-----	177304
NASTY GIRL.....	178577	-----	171527	GOLLUM.....	177305	-----	177305
GOLD DIGGER.....	178318	177918	171378	HOMER SIMPSON.....	177306	-----	177306
HOT IN HERE.....	178873	177772	171029	ITALIAN JOB.....	177307	-----	177307
I'LL BE MISSING YOU.....	178921	177797	171030	WEIRDO ALERT.....	177194	-----	177194
GHETTO GOSPEL.....	178476	177477	171288	THE A-TEAM INTRO.....	177169	-----	177169
NUMB ENCORE.....	178736	177723	171156	AUSTIN POWERS.....	177158	-----	177158

CRAZY VIDS



SEXY GIRL VIDS



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■ **GENRE:** STEALTH ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (Wi-Fi)
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.konami.com

■ **BACK STORY:** *Metal Gear Solid* is one of the most beloved series of games. Up until now the PSP has only had turn-based strategy games. *Portable Ops* changes that, but is the Gear too big for the little black box?



■ Snake wears sneakers... for *sneaking*



■ "... I told you to go easy on the champagne! Why do you always have to embarrass me at dinner parties?"



■ "Say it! Say eyepatches are cool!"
"Eyepatches... are... GAY!" CHOKE!



■ Ninjas – they always 'drop in' uninvited



■ "Yeah, 'I' is right. I *did* just turkey slap you. Yeah, I *went* there!"

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

The PSP gets a dose of Snake and this time it's really solid!

PlayStation.
SILVER AWARD
9/10

When those of us blessed with a PSP heard we'd be getting a *Metal Gear* title almost straight after the unit's release, fists were pumped in the air, happy posts shot onto online forums and a throaty roar of "WOOOT!" swept the nation.

Sneak was coming, and that's always a good thing! All hail *Metal Gear*. And so forth. Then the cold hard crotch-kick of reality hit gamers where it hurt. This new *Metal Gear*, this *Metal Gear Acid*, was not like the other *Metal Gears*. It was, in fact, a turn-based, strategy-heavy, card game. Boo.

Now admittedly both it and its sequel were quite good card games but, really, let's be honest here: it's not what we wanted. What's next? *Resident Evil* redefined as a cutesy platformer? *Tony Hawk's Knitting Simulator*? *Grand Theft Auto: Dance, Dance Revolution*? No!

We wanted Snake the way we liked him before: solid, sneaky and stealthy. A game brimming with insanely long, and often incomprehensible cut-scenes,

and glorious visuals. And, of course, the boss fights. What *Metal Gear* is complete without crazy boss fights? Now elements of these good things were in the *Acid* games, but it just didn't feel right.

Evidently the creators of the *Metal Gear* series felt this disturbance in the force because here's *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops* – and it's an absolute belter.

TALK... OR I'LL KNOCK YOU OUT AND DRAG YOU BEHIND A CRATE! *Portable Ops* is *Metal Gear Solid* as it should be... and more. It actually has a plot that almost makes something approaching sense and follows basically directly on from *MGS3: Snake Eater*. So expect more Cold War rhetoric and recurring characters as well as some spanking new ones.

Now, we'll get one thing out of the way right now. This isn't quite as cool as *Snake Eater*. It's certainly not the glowing masterpiece that *Subsistence* was either but it is a more than worthy addition to the

Metal Gear franchise that not only does what we expect but also adds some original, and impressive, wrinkles to the gameplay dynamic that both thematically and practically expand the *Metal Gear* universe.

■ SNAKE? SNAKEEEEEEEAKE?

Okay, we're getting way ahead of ourselves here. Ya'll wanna hear about the plot. So let's do this. The game starts with Snake in a prison cell. Why is he in a prison cell? He can't remember. But it seems he's being framed for a crime he didn't commit... or did he? It's a neat opening and very intriguing but let's face it – no prison can keep Snake and it's not long before you escape, get weapons and start knocking out guards and hiding them behind stuff.

Now this is where we expected business to run as usual. Don't get us wrong, we like that usual business a whole lot. But we expected levels to follow on in a linear fashion, ending with boss fights and those aforementioned cut-scenes.

■ WE WERE WRONG

First up the cut-scenes have been changed. Instead of the beautifully rendered, long, soap opera-style mini-movies of the last PS2 entry, we have these comic book-looking, charcoal sketch type capers. They're not as pretty as the cut-scenes that stroked our retina in *Metal Gears* past, and take a little getting used to, but they help differentiate this from other games in the series.

■ WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

Believe it or not *Portable Ops* is, to a certain extent, open-ended in structure. Oh sure, there're story missions you'll need to complete to finish the game but they can't always be accessed straight away. Plus you're not alone. Almost straight away you'll be teamed up with a bloke named Campbell who drives a truck from location to location. Sort of like a moveable base.

We don't want to ruin the plot, so we won't, but it becomes very apparent very



■ Usually the enemies slash on you from above in a Kojima game



■ Laser pointers – handy in battle, annoying at the movie theatre



quickly that even a veritable one man army like Snake isn't going to be able to finish this mission alone. This is where Op's biggest evolution comes into it play. You can knock out enemy combatants (sure, you've done that before) but then instead of lobbing them off a cliff or just ignoring them – you actually take them back to the truck and imprison them. Why? Because after a few days pass (yes, there's a time frame at work) you will have converted them to your team. Evidently Snake delivers some stirring speeches because pretty much anyone you drop in the back of the truck joins your force. And then you have the choice to play as them.

BUT I WANNA BE SNAKE!

Okay, everyone wants to be Snake but sometimes it's simply not practical. Now, don't worry – you won't ever have to play as Raiden (thank God!) but some of the troops you recruit have skills. Read their profiles and place them accordingly. You can put them in your sneaking unit (basically the team that explores the level), your spying unit (which uncovers information, weapons and occasionally vital plot points in locations you're not exploring at the time), medical unit (to heal the wounded faster), tech unit (to actually make better weapons) and even an independent unit where the soldier will, well, do whatever else needs doing. In a very real sense you can fit an army in the back of your truck of up to 100 soldiers – which leads us to believe the truck must be

like the TARDIS on the inside – it's a really cool new feature in *Metal Gear*. You can even recruit soldiers online.

Now some of you are probably asking, "Why would I want to play as some damn grunt when I could be Snake?" Simple answer – often the grunt is wearing the same uniform as the rest of the soldiers. So you can just go walking through the level to your objective – as long as you don't act suspicious – rather than hiding, crawling, jumping and rolling all the time. Really, the choice is yours – but *Portable Ops* is a pretty tough game with a learning curve so steep it's almost vertical – so you might want to take advantage of the uniform thing.

TEAM SNAKE!

It's interesting during the course of the game that themes of leadership and Big Boss' command over soldiers are raised. The plot comes together in a logical and interesting fashion for the most part... but of course there are the series' iconic crosses, double crosses, triple crosses and the like to leave you scratching your head. Hey, this is a *Metal Gear* game, after all.

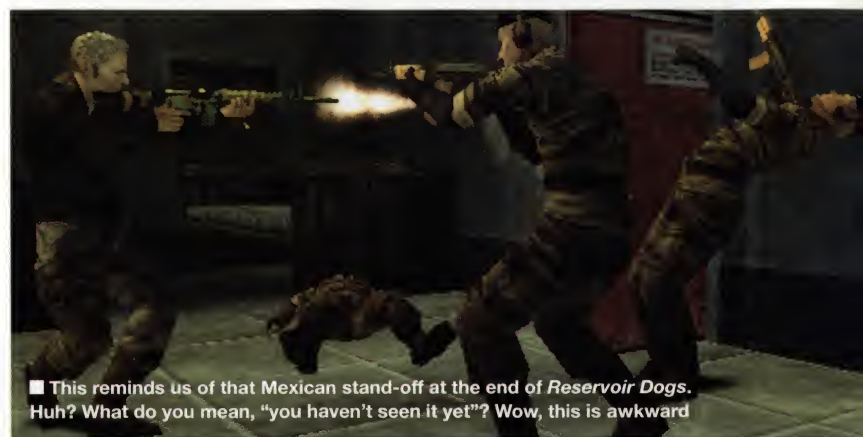
PROS:

- Stunning sound and visuals
- Cool army recruiting feature

CONS:

- Some missions frustrate
- Slightly lacking in boss fights

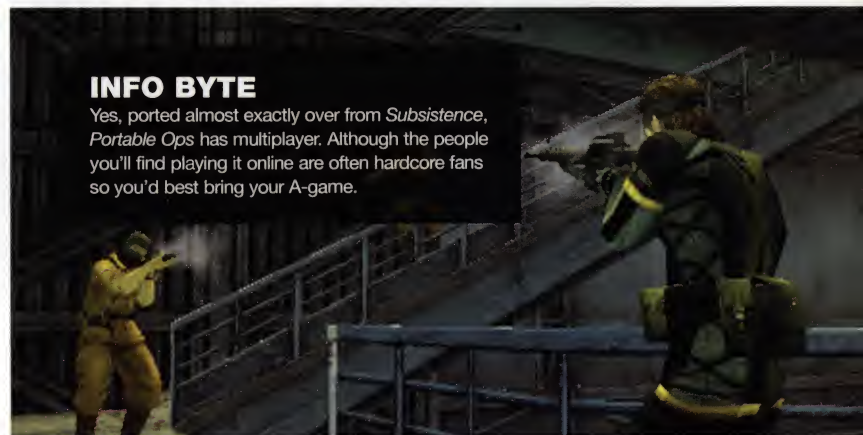
VERDICT: *Portable Ops* is the first "proper" *Metal Gear* game for PSP and it's an absolute cracker. Get it now!



■ This reminds us of that Mexican stand-off at the end of *Reservoir Dogs*. Huh? What do you mean, "you haven't seen it yet"? Wow, this is awkward

INFO BYTE

Yes, ported almost exactly over from *Subsistence*, *Portable Ops* has multiplayer. Although the people you'll find playing it online are often hardcore fans so you'd best bring your A-game.



"This is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for, and will more than fill the void we have to face while waiting for *Metal Gear Solid 4*..."

LAY IT ON ME!

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops is a great game. It looks fantastic (the *Subsistence* camera has been ported across – hooray!), the characters and models are animated well. The missions are varied and different (how about a level where you have to rescue Snake?) and the boss fights are almost as cool as those from *Snake Eater* – although we could have done with a few more of them.

The concept of creating your own army is original, and easily implemented, and watching Snake become ever more the Big Boss is fascinating. This is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for, and will more than fill the void we have to face while waiting for *Metal Gear Solid 4* for the PS3. Snake's most definitely back and we couldn't be happier. — Anthony O'Connor

ME AND WHOSE ARMY? THIS ONE, ACTUALLY!

Some of your troops will be skilled at shooting, some at building stuff and others, frankly, cannon fodder. Depending on your commands they will follow you, kill for you and often die for you. Not wanting to give anything away, but some of your favourite troops will die. But that's war, son. Suck it up Big Boss. A man doesn't get to your position without a certain amount of blood on his hands.



OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

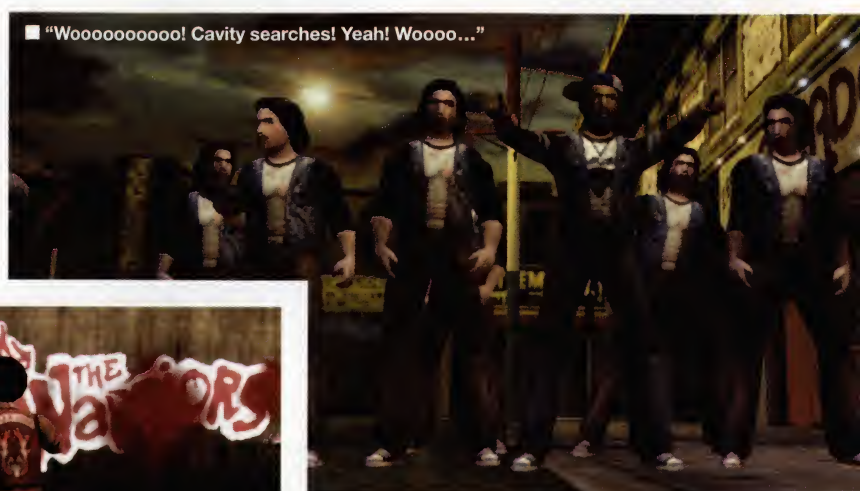
■ **GENRE:** BEAT 'EM UP
■ **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR LEEDS
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (Wi-Fi)
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.rockstargames.com/thewarriors

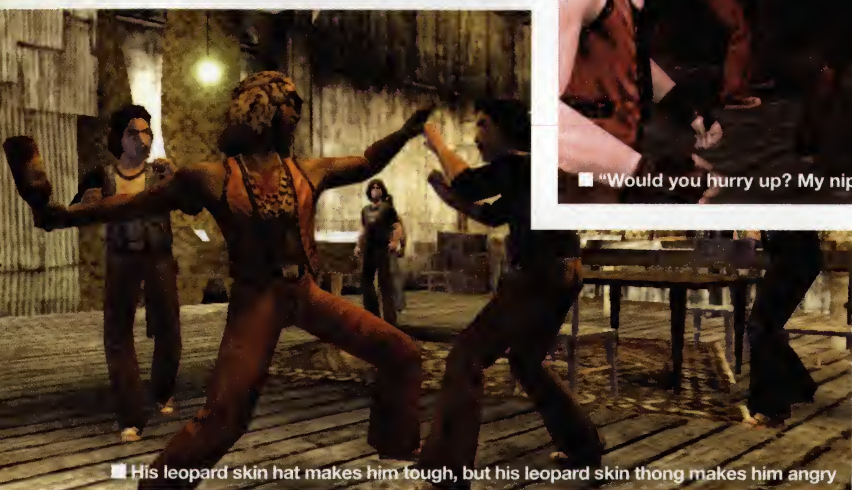
■ **BACK STORY:** *The Warriors* hit PS2 back in Christmas 2005 to instant acclaim and was praised for its impeccable faithfulness to the original film. Rockstar Leeds has worked in conjunction with Rockstar Toronto to make sure the PSP version is just as good.



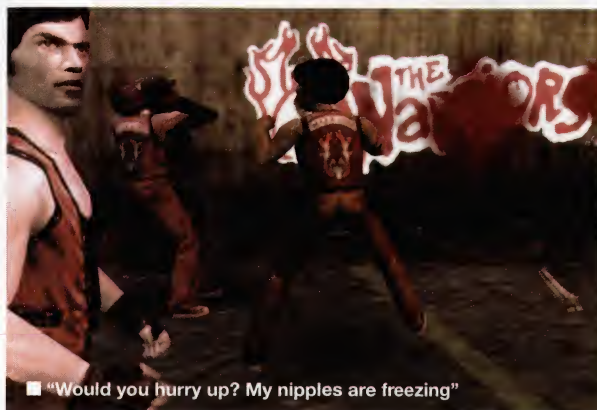
■ "You guys have five seconds to leave before we start the cavity searches"



■ "Woowooooooooo! Cavity searches! Yeah! Woowooo..."



■ His leopard skin hat makes him tough, but his leopard skin thong makes him angry



■ "Would you hurry up? My nipples are freezing"



■ "Are you gonna stop crying or do you want another beating? Huh?"

THE WARRIORS

Can you dig it, suckas?



The *Warriors* is far from the first PS2 game to find its way onto the PSP – the list is long but mostly undistinguished. We tend to approach these ports with a fair amount of trepidation as, more often than not, they're little more than stripped down versions of the original with poor controls.

It's perhaps due to this general scepticism that *The Warriors* on PSP is so surprising. Unlike many of those that make the jump from PS2 to your pocket, *The Warriors* has lost nothing in the conversion. Admirably, save for a slight drop in visual quality, almost no concessions have been

made to squeeze the game onto a UMD – every character appears, every mission is available, every bonus mode is included and every cut-scene intact.

COME OUT TO PLAY

Violent and vicious, *The Warriors* for PS2 oozed cool.

The PSP version is no different.

Based on the 1979 Walter Hill flick of the same name, *The Warriors* is a stylised blend of brawling, exploration, stealth and inventive mini-games. Over the course of the game you'll take the Warriors from their humble beginnings in Coney Island,

Brooklyn, and take them 'all-city'. You'll battle through The Bronx, soldier through Soho and love every minute of it. The game itself actually kicks off around three months before the events that transpire in the movie, and you won't get to those until you're over two thirds of the way through the game (and that's after a series of flashback missions that examine how each main character became a Warrior).

A beat 'em up at heart, *The Warriors* blends old school charm with new age sensibilities for an action/adventure that's easy to pick up but complex enough to sate hardcore brawler aficionados. Simple, two-button combos and a straightforward interface allow casual gamers to hammer away but still lets more experienced gamers build up a repertoire of unique combos, tandem moves, throws, straddles and contextual attacks. The fighting is frantic and dirty (curb stomps, groin kicks, face slams – you'll see them all) and the brawls are often quite massive (nine-on-nine scraps happen regularly). You can

expect plenty of weapons-of-opportunity too – bottles, cinder blocks, knives and bats will be scattered amongst the trash, waiting to be buried in some hapless gangbanger's chest or skull.

TURF WAR

None of this is news to you if you've played the original, so we'll get onto what's improved, namely the multiplayer – which has benefited greatly from the PSP's Wi-Fi capabilities. The PS2 version boasted a great co-op mode but was let down by a somewhat jarring camera that switched from split-screen to a shared screen every time you neared each other (although you could disable it). The PSP version, naturally, gives players their own screen and while PSP multiplayer is not as 'convenient' as PS2 multiplayer (for a start you'll need two copies of the game) it's a welcome touch. We had a few sound-synching problems during cut-scenes and occasions where enemies would appear on the host's PSP but not the linked one,



■ "Oh. I thought you meant take out *this* trash..."



■ "All y'all – disaappear. Except you. You got pretty eyes. Let's make out"

"The Warriors is a film adaptation like no other."

but otherwise it's tight as a drum. Of course, co-op is not the only multiplayer. You can expect the full range of multiplayer modes from the PS2 version too – from king of the hill to wheelchair races and rooftop rumbles to survival. The lack of gameshare for some of the multiplayer modes or support for more than two players seems like a missed opportunity though.

It's also well worth mentioning that the controls haven't suffered as much as we'd expected either. The PSP's analogue nub makes graffiti tagging a little tougher and the lack of vibration makes mugging, interrogating and escaping custody a bit less intuitive, but for the most part you never feel like you're fighting with a half-cocked control scheme.

TRUE COLOURS

You don't have to have seen the film to enjoy playing *The Warriors* – it remains a fantastic experience. However, we recommend that you do because you'll see just how accurately every single element of the cult classic has been recreated. The astonishingly authentic recreation of New York's neon underground circa 1979 is just as impressive on PSP as it was on PS2, and the attention to detail still amazes. *The Warriors* was the game the crew at Rockstar always wanted to make, and it still shows. The faultless costume and character design, the silky-smooth brawling animations, the use of the film's original score and actors for voice work, the recreation of important scenes, shot-for-shot – *The Warriors* is a film adaptation



like no other. Back in 2005 we couldn't stress enough how well Rockstar turned a cult-classic into a kick-arse game and that an unprecedented dedication to the source material had resulted in one of the best presented games we've ever played. Nothing has changed.

Unfortunately, that's its biggest problem. Rockstar Leeds, in conjunction with Rockstar Toronto, has done such a good job of making *The Warriors* for PSP identical to the console original that it may be hard for fans to justify a purchase. If you missed it on PS2 and are looking for something to while away the hours on the train after knocking over *Vice City Stories*, *The Warriors* is a no-brainer. Desperate, gritty, violent, slick and super-cool – you just can't miss it. However, if you've already bopped your way through the Big Apple on PS2 the improved co-op multiplayer on PSP probably isn't reason enough to do it again. **👉 Luke Reilly**

NICE MOVES

Each Warrior has his own unique style and different strengths and weaknesses. For example, the young Rembrandt doesn't have the muscle of beefcakes like Snow or Ajax but he's far better at tagging. The different gangs each have their own fighting styles too. The Baseball Furies are deadly with a Louisville Slugger in hand, the Turnbull ACs fight very aggressively and never back down, the Lizzies (an all-girl gang) aren't afraid to slap, scratch and deliver swift kicks to the wedding vegetables and the Orphans are weak and go down after a few solid strikes.



PROS:

- A great movie adaptation
- Co-op trumps the PS2 version

CONS:

- It's the same game, just portable
- You prefer *Anne of Green Gables*

VERDICT: A fantastic game in its own right, but only essential for those who don't already have it on PS2.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

INFO BYTE

Every single gang, boss, pedestrian, cop and hobo in the game can be unlocked for *The Warriors*' multiplayer modes – that's well over 350 characters!



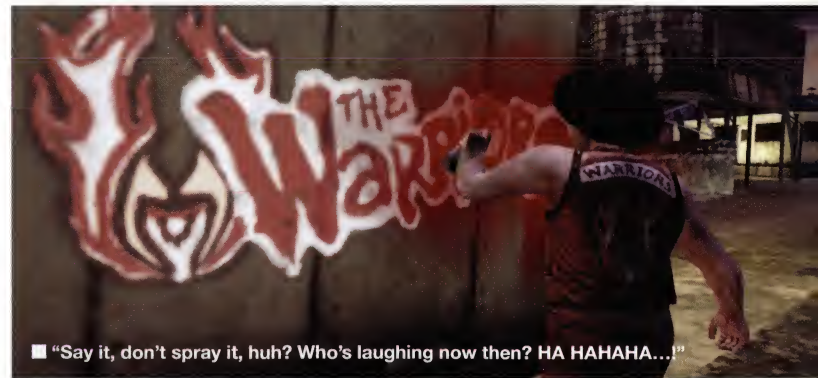
■ "Don't you walk away! Who gave you that leopard print hat? Me! Who loves you baby?"



■ Five-finger discount



■ "Want a fisting you'll never forget?"



■ "Say it, don't spray it, huh? Who's laughing now then? HA HAHAHA..."



■ "Just say it. Just say 'I love crepes' and I'll let you go..."

■ **GENRE:** STEALTH ACTION
■ **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** ACQUIRE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** <http://www.shinobido.com/>

■ **BACK STORY:** Founders of the *Tenchu* series – which debuted all the way back on the PSone – Acquire recently handed the franchise over to From Software, but has since returned with the *Shinobido* games in an effort to win back the stealthy ninja crown.

SHINOBIDO: TALES OF THE NINJA

“Not quite the right direction. The way to hell is... right here!”

Ninjas are possibly the coolest idea that anyone has ever had – AskANinja.com will tell you as much. They're so cool that anything in the slightest bit mediocre can often be completely absolved of its sins by their shadow-hopping inclusion. Unfortunately, the recent *Tenchu* efforts have proved an exception to this cosmic rule and sadly enough, *Shinobido: Tales of the Ninja* steps on its own caltrops on the way in, too.

The PSP's take on Acquire's new baby functions as an extremely truncated version of its bigger PS2 brother, *Shinobido: Way of the Ninja*. The overly complex, *Ninja Scroll*-esque political backstory has been compressed into a series of convoluted, fast-scrolling textual interludes as the game largely does away with plotting in favour of streamlining the action. However, it's the graphics that have really

taken a shuriken directly to the side of the neck – they are simply awful. There is literally no background to speak of; all that surrounds the cramped and featureless play area is a gaping morass of darkness that, should your hapless ninja protagonist accidentally leap into it (and trust us, this happens a lot), well it's back to a horrendous load time to try, try again. Speaking of inadvertently stepping off into the void, you will be doing a lot of this in addition too: randomly leaping in front of startled guards waving your arms and shrieking, fleeing from several huge, hulking armoured warriors straight into a wall, and much, much more!

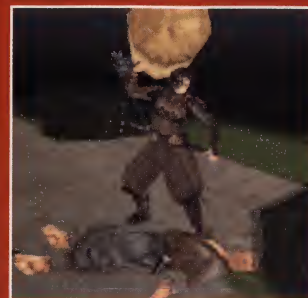
Why? In tandem with the slippery controls, *Shinobido*'s camera is tantamount to gaming harakiri. It's virtually immovable, and can only be re-centred behind your ninja (even then, it's not uncommon for the damn

thing not to respond at all to your frantic button mashing). It also has the most alarming tendency to position itself exactly where the viewing angle is the least helpful, and being that there is no radar or practical way of viewing your surroundings, this is why the aforementioned scenarios will start to become a regular fixture of your *Shinobido* experience.

As a final affront from the shadows, *Shinobido* recalls one of the major pitfalls of the original in that there are only two different types of play to partake in – generic fetch-quests (ie. steal something) and 'waste everybody' missions. Unlike the original which managed to taper the gradual inanity of this shortcoming with branching gameplay, the PSP version is generally linear and thus further hamstrung by the lack of variety. Avoid, like the venomous caress of Kagero! **Toby McCasker**

ELITE CUSTOMISING SKILLS

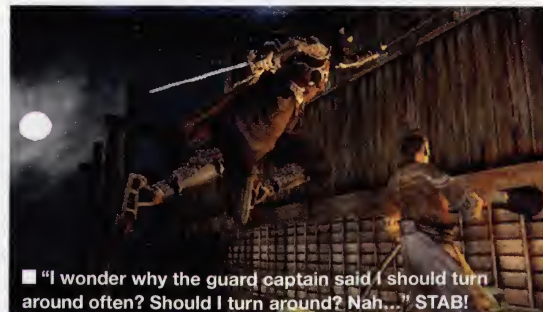
With the PSP's USB cable, custom maps and missions can be created and ported from the PS2 version onto the portable version – even uploaded onto the Internet and subsequently downloaded to PSPs everywhere. It's a very nifty idea in theory which has already seen player-created content that surpasses the designer's original ideas in quality, but the ungainly mess that is *Shinobido: Tales of the Ninja* means that it's a nifty idea that will go sadly neglected for the most part. Much like the game itself.



■ *Shinobido*. Not pictured: a good game



■ “Arrrgggghhhh! My neck! I’m not supposed to get swords in it!”



■ “I wonder why the guard captain said I should turn around often? Should I turn around? Nah...” STAB!



■ “Man, guard duty is sooo boring. I wish something would happen. Anything will do... huh?” SLICE!



■ “Hey, check out the smoking hot ninja chick!”



■ Smoking hot ninja chick

PROS:

- Chuck Norris can't deny ninjas
- Awesome ambient, oriental BGM

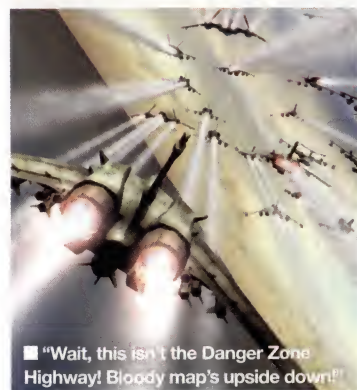
CONS:

- Chuck Norris doesn't know crap
- It's uh, virtually unplayable

VERDICT: The god-awful camera will mess with your mind more than any ninjutsu shenanigans ever could.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

04



■ **GENRE:** FLIGHT COMBAT
■ **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** KUJU
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-6 (Wi-Fi)
■ **PRICE:** \$59.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** YES
■ **WEB:** www.machpsp.com

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



INFO BYTE

Get down low and perilously skim the ground to refill that afterburner you've no doubt been cranking the whole way! Yee-haw!

M.A.C.H.

That son of a bitch cut me off!

It was the 1 ½ hour long Kenny Loggins music video that was *Top Gun* that ingrained in every '80s adolescent a testosterone-fueled desire to whizz through the air writing cheques that their bodies couldn't possibly hope to cash. Until now, very little in the gaming world has catered to that desire. Enter *M.A.C.H.* (or *Modified Air Combat Heroes* for the more verbosely inclined), which invites you to strap into the cockpit and get ready to rumble.

Initially only one craft is available, but proceeding through the Career mode will unlock additional jets to diddle with. The real joy of these beasts lies in your ability to customise every last detail on them – motifs for the wings and body, badder engines/

weaponry, and all manner of alternate parts which directly affect the ship's handling, speed, and killing potential.

Naturally you need mondo cashola for this, and the only way to get the green is to engage in *M.A.C.H.*'s two major play modes: hi-octane racing, or all-in dogfighting. Gameplay excels in the racing segments but hits a wall

during the deathmatch sessions. Aiming is completely automatic with no option otherwise, meaning that taking down your opponents is merely a yawn-fest of firing at or near them. Thankfully these bits are quick and to the point, and barrelling down canyons barely wide enough to fit your flying coffin makes them very easy to forgive. **Toby McCasker**

PROS:

- Risk life and limb at top speed
- Tom Cruise isn't in it

CONS:

- Dogfighting is too automatic
- Awful music. Where's Kenny?

VERDICT: Racing modern day fighting machines over hair-raising trackage? Why wasn't this done sooner?

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

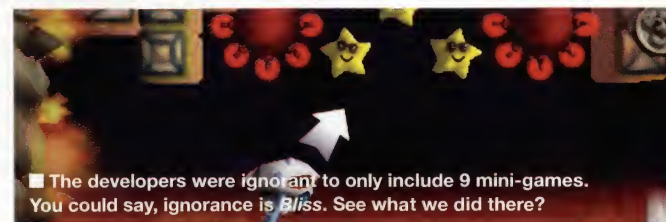
07



■ **GENRE:** MINI-GAMES
■ **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (Wi-Fi)
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.funsta.com/bliss/

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



BLISS ISLAND

Thar he blows!

Hoshi is a Zwooph; a bizarre little blue-furred critter with no arms and a trunk that blows. He's a bit like the subservient nice girl equivalent to the ever-affable Kirby – what with that fellow's nasty fondness for swallowing – and the Catholic school girl antithesis of Yoshi's awful tendency to spit right back at you [Whoa, ease up on the Nintendo references – Ed.]. He's a lovely little guy, and you'll be guiding him through nine mini-games that all centre around manipulating the direction of a hapless furry offside in order to bounce various objects around the place. Whether it's punting slowly

descending fruit into the waiting mouth of a monster or whacking coloured balls together in a destructive take on pocket billiards, Hoshi gets three lives to make an impression and if he doesn't it's back to the beginning of the task with him.

Although bright and colourful and deceptively kiddy, *Bliss Island* plays a horrible trick on everyone in that it becomes exceedingly frustrating very quickly. All is quite alright until you hit the devilish 'Brick Invaders' level, which is nothing less than an exercise in how to microwave your own head. The biggest problem with this sudden resurgence of difficulty at around the fourth or fifth mini-

game is that you cannot access any further games until you successfully complete the one you're on. He might be supremely lovable (and a lot less dirty than his peers at Nintendo), but the steep difficulty and unforgiving 'three lives' system means that Hoshi and his trunk might be playing a little hard-to-get for some. **Toby McCasker**

PROS:

- You enjoy a rock-solid challenge
- Some of the games are addictive

CONS:

- Severe difficulty spikes
- Only nine mini-games? Ouch...

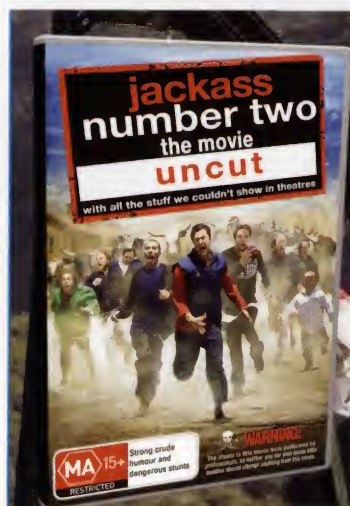
VERDICT: Provided you're not easily frustrated, this might be for you. Fragile temperaments steer well clear!

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

06

FILM

Johnny Knoxville and crew cheat death in *Jackass Number Two*, Sarah Michelle Gellar looks hot in *The Grudge 2*, Al Gore heats up in *An Inconvenient Truth* and more!



BEST BITS



A blindfolded Knoxville braces for impact



Wee Man is launched by parachute over a river



Knoxville jumps into the sea on a rocket bicycle



KEEP GO OUT OF CALIFORNIA

DVD OF THE MONTH

JACKASS NUMBER TWO (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Jeff Tremaine **STARRING:** Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Ryan Dunn, Steve-O, Jason "Wee Man" Acuña, Chris Pontius, Preston Lacy, Dave England, Ehren McGhehey

Like its predecessor, *Jackass Number Two* is basically a collection of completely irresponsible and absolutely absurd stunts and skits.

Highlights include (but aren't limited to) Knoxville, Pontius, and Margera being blasted with riot control pellets, Wee Man being flung over a river with a parachute and a giant fan, Knoxville and Ryan Dunn wrestling a giant boa constrictor in a jungle gym, a four-person see-saw in the middle of a bull ring, Spike Jonze as an elderly woman losing clothes in public, loop-the-loop on a mini-motorcycle, Pontius' penis being fed to a snake, Steve-O attempting to chug beer through his anus, Margera and co. replacing his rotund father with the even more ample Preston Lacy in the middle of the night to frighten his mother in bed and Knoxville riding a big, red rocket into the sky – Wile E. Coyote-style.

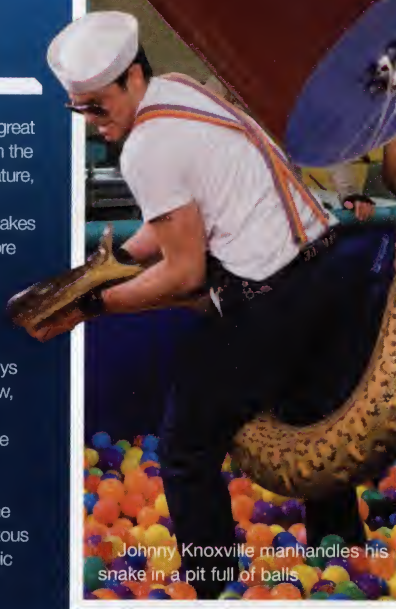
The DVD is bolstered by a bevy of great extras too including a commentary from the *Jackass* team, a behind-the-scenes feature, additional and extended segments not shown in theatres, deleted scenes, outtakes and more – most of which are even more outrageous than the film itself.

Anybody who seriously views *Jackass* as an illustration of the decay of modern society is giving it too much credit. It's just a bunch of guys having fun the best way they know how, filming it and making a packet.

It's all fun and games until someone loses an eye. Then it's hilarious.

VERDICT: It's not quite as good as the original, but there are few things as riotous as watching a man get his friend's pubic hairs glued to his face. **LR**

★★★★★



Johnny Knoxville manhandles his snake in a pit full of balls

JACKASS 101

The concept of *Jackass* was developed from the now-defunct skateboarding magazine *Big Brother*, edited by *Jackass* director Jeff Tremaine, staffed by Chris Pontius, Dave Carnie and Rick Kosick and featuring regular contributions from the likes of Johnny Knoxville. When Knoxville came up with the idea to test self-defense equipment on himself for an article, he

pitched it to Tremaine, who convinced him to film it and any other stunts for stories. The footage of Knoxville being tasered, sprayed with mace and actually shot while wearing a bulletproof vest appeared on the second *Big Brother* skate video, *Number Two*, and he quickly became a hit.

On a *Big Brother* road trip Knoxville met Bam Margera, who was busy at the

time making *CKY* videos, which basically consisted of him and his friends performing skits and stunts around West Chester, Pennsylvania. Tremaine was impressed by the tapes and drafted Bam and his crew into what became the *Jackass* team.



SCI-FI

CHILDREN OF MEN (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Alfonso Cuarón
STARRING: Clive Owens, Julianne Moore, Michael Caine



What would happen to humanity if it was faced with unavoidable extinction? That's the question posed in this bleak look at 2027. Women have become infertile and the world has

collapsed into anarchy. It's on the brink of ruin that salvation arrives in the form of a miraculously pregnant woman. Theo (Clive Owen) is the reluctant member of an underground group who soon discovers he is the only person who can save this woman and humanity. Confronting and depressing, *Children of Men* is an unpredictable drama that highlights just how lazy and formulaic most recent sci-fis have become.

VERDICT: An amazing film that helps you appreciate how good we have it. **NP**
 ★★★★★

DOCUMENTARY

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH (PG)

DIRECTOR: Davis Guggenheim
STARRING: Al Gore



Most of us are probably aware that global warming is real and is happening right now. The 'inconvenient truth' that far less of us are aware of is just how serious

it is and just how little time we have left to repair the damage we're doing to the planet's climate. Al Gore's passionate quest to educate the world and instigate the change needed is both startling and inspiring. Did you know that unless we start reducing the amount of carbon dioxide we're producing before long a large enough portion of the polar ice caps will have melted that water levels will rise seven metres? That's enough to put the homes of 60 million people under sea level. Clearly, we need to do more.

VERDICT: Do yourself, and the planet, a favour and watch this movie. **NP**
 ★★★★★

COMEDY

THE MATADOR (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Richard Shepard
STARRING: Pierce Brosnan, Greg Kinnear, Hope Davis



Richard Shepard does a great job on this surprisingly sharp black comedy. Greg Kinnear doesn't stretch himself too far as the charming, mild mannered businessman

(Danny) but does a good job as the movie's straight man. Brosnan, on the other hand, steals every scene as the burnt out prick of a hitman (Julian). After spending his life drinking, smoking, screwing and killing, Julian has a meltdown in Mexico city, where he finds meaning in his newfound friendship with Danny. Although the majority of the laughs come from the movie's earlier scenes, where Julian is still an utter bastard, his later mellowing out gives him some much-needed depth.

VERDICT: An entertaining take on the potential pitfalls of being a professional killer. **NP**
 ★★★★★

DRAMA

A GUIDE TO RECOGNISING YOUR SAINTS (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Dito Montiel
STARRING: Robert Downey, Jr., Shia LaBeouf, Channing Tatum, Chazz Palminteri



A Guide To Recognising Your Saints is director Dito Montiel's first feature and is based on his own book of the same name. *Saints* chronicles two pivotal times in the

author and former punk rocker's life, flicking between the events that led to him leaving home as a teenager and what happened when he returned 15 years later.

It's a sweltering summer in Astoria, New York, circa 1986, and Dito and his friends are growing up fast. However, while he dreams of moving to LA to start a band, around him his friends are winding up on drugs, in prison or dead.

Saints has that unflinchingly honest edge that only comes from a filmmaker telling his own story and is buoyed by some truly remarkable performances. Chazz Palminteri's intimidating yet loving father is a standout, but the young cast of unknowns steal the show, each displaying acting chops well beyond their years – particularly Shia LaBeouf's confident but troubled Dito and Channing Tatum's violent and unpredictable Antonio – Dito's best friend.

VERDICT: *Saints* is a gritty, autobiographical film that pulls no punches and lets it all lay bare. Montiel's vivid portrait does for Astoria what Scorsese's *Mean Streets* did for Little Italy. Highly recommended. **LR**
 ★★★★★



NEXT MONTH...

The Prestige
Borat!
The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus
Little Miss Sunshine
Macbeth
Eragon
The Guardian
Thank You For Smoking
Night At The Museum
Open Season

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH WAS PARODIED IN A SOUTH PARK EPISODE CALLED 'MANBEARPIG'. AL GORE LAUGHED IT OFF SAYING, "THEIR COMIC SENSIBILITY IS AIMED AT A DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC... BUT I STILL FIND A LOT OF WHAT THEY DO HILARIOUS."

TV

NCIS – THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Various
STARRING: Mark Harmon



The third season of the increasingly popular series, *NCIS* continues to impress. Kicking off with the grizzly Agent Gibbs going off the reservation to avenge the death of one of his

own at the hands of a rogue Mossad double agent, there's rarely a dud episode. Season three also introduces a new investigator, the spunky Israeli Mossad agent Ziva David. Sharply written, well shot and with a quirky sense of humour, *NCIS* is a belter of a series. Crime shows are a dime-a-dozen these days but the mix of action, drama and suspense give *NCIS* a real edge.

VERDICT: Still top television and well worth tuning in to on DVD. Very addictive. **LR**
 ★★★★★

HORROR

THE GRUDGE 2 (M)

DIRECTOR: Takashi Shimizu
STARRING: Sarah Michelle Geller, Amber Tamblyn, Edison Chen



This is a sequel of a remake of a Japanese horror film. Using, no less, the same director as the Japanese original. Confused? Try watching the bloody thing. It makes about as

much sense as a series of loosely linked short films, connected by the now ubiquitous J-horror "chick with long black hair" and a kooky little kid that makes cat noises. The original was sporadically scary, the remake actually managed to yank a few jolts out of the material also but this just feels like the work of a director who is just tired of trotting out the same old guff. Remakes of foreign horror films sometimes work. Other times they end up like this. Avoid.

VERDICT: Sarah Michelle Geller should have stuck with sticking bits of wood into vampires. **AO**
 ★★

ANIME

FULL METAL ALCHEMIST: CONQUEROR OF SHAMBALLA (M)

DIRECTOR: Seiji Mizushima
STARRING: Romi Pak, Rie Kugimiyaw



Conqueror of Shamballa is the movie length conclusion to the much loved series about two brothers who break alchemy's strictest laws to bring their mother back from

the dead. They fail and pay a heavy price. One loses an arm and a leg, the other's spirit is encased in a suit of armour. Action packed and tongue-in-cheek, it explores the realms of alternate universes and timelines and tells of the brothers' journey to reverse the damage done, and to reunite with each other, after they were split into two different universes.

VERDICT: A great ensemble cast of characters round out the series, but with hints of a new beginning. **DK**
 ★★★★★



CINEMA

HOT FUZZ (RATING TBC)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Edgar Wright ■ **STARRING:** Simon Pegg, Nick Frost

From the makers of *Shaun of the Dead*, Nicholas Angel (Simon Pegg), a top class London cop, is so good at his job he's making everyone around him look bad. As a result he's transferred to a sleepy west country village called Sandford and partnered with the hapless, but well meaning, Danny Butterman (Nick Frost) – swapping high-drama city busts for soggy school fetes in the process. However, when the two stumble on a series of suspicious accidents things get a lot more exciting. Opens March 15



■ "Watch out for the guns..."



■ "I swallowed my tongue ring!"



■ "You have the right to remain delicious!"

ALSO SHOWING

NORBIT (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Eddie Murphy
A comedy about a meek man's attempts to leave his gigantic, mean wife for an old crush. Murphy plays multiple roles. Opens February 22

ROCKY BALBOA (M)

■ **STARRING:** Sylvester Stallone
Rocky is coaxed out of retirement for one last exhibition match against the current champ. Opens February 22

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Ken Watanabe
A film from Clint Eastwood to compliment his other Iwo Jima flick, *Flags Of Our Fathers*, that tells the story from a Japanese perspective. Opens February 22

SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS (M)

■ **STARRING:** Jon Heder
From the director of *Old School*, Dr. P (Billy Bob Thornton) runs a 'School for Scoundrels' to turn the mild into the wild. Opens March 22

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

George Lucas has confirmed that the long-awaited fourth instalment of the

Indiana Jones series will begin shooting this year. It's been 18 years since Harrison Ford donned Indy's fedora hat but the 64-year-old actor will assume the role again. Despite retiring from acting five years ago, Sean Connery is considering returning to the screen also to reprise his role as Indy's father. Precise locations are yet to be chosen but part of the flick will be shot in LA. The yet-to-be-titled *Indiana Jones 4* is slated to hit cinemas in May 2008.



IT'S ALL GREEK TO US

The big screen adaptation of Frank Miller's (*Sin City*) epic graphic novel, *300* will arrive in theatres this

April following its world premiere at the Berlin film festival. *300* is the true story of 300 elite Spartan warriors, led by their fearless king Leonidas, who clashed with Xerxes and his enormous Persian army in the Battle of Thermopylae. Director Zack Snyder (*Dawn of the Dead*) has combined the highly stylised look of *Sin City* and the epic sword swinging of *Troy* for a film that looks unbelievably good.



DIE HARDEST?

In case you weren't aware, John McClane is returning in the fourth chapter of the *Die Hard* series, *Live*

Free or Die Hard, to thwart a sophisticated bunch of cyber-terrorists from crippling the economy by crashing banking networks and the stock market. There's a short teaser doing the rounds that doesn't reveal much but features a slightly more grizzled Willis kicking people out of apartment block windows, ducking under airborne car wrecks and launching a police cruiser into a low-flying helicopter. Justin Long will play Bruce Willis' hacker sidekick in the film, *Deadwood*'s Timothy Olyphant (who has replaced Vin Diesel in the planned *Hitman* game-to-movie adaptation) will star as the villain and writer-turned-director-turned-actor Kevin Smith will fulfil a lifelong dream with his own supporting role.

ULTIMATE PS3 GADGETS

This month we play-test Sony's new 1080p projector



SONY MYLO

■ **PRICE:** \$450
 ■ **WEB:** www.mylo.com

This Mylo isn't a Scottish DJ who wants to destroy rock and roll. Instead, it wants to destroy telephone charges. You see, it's got Wi-Fi onboard and comes with Skype pre-loaded, so you can make free calls over the Internet. You'll also be able to type emails using the slide-out keyboard and view web pages on the 2.4-inch screen.



SONY VPL-VW50

■ **PRICE:** \$7,999
 ■ **WEB:** www.sony.com.au

Sony's first 1080p projector, the VW100, produced pictures of incredible clarity, but it also costs a bomb. This one will launch at half the price of the VW100, but will still offer the same amazing picture. Because projectors need to be used in dimly lit rooms they're not as versatile as the stunning 1080p Bravia X-series LCD TVs (see page 60) but they do have the advantage of allowing you to produce a much larger image.

FUJIFILM FINEPIX S5 PRO

■ **PRICE:** TBC
 ■ **WEB:** www.fujifilm.com.au

It's worrying, but if cameras get any smarter, they may rise up against us and establish a new world order based on ISO levels. This pro digi-SLR takes massive 12-megapixel images that are rendered super-crisp thanks to two-stage noise reduction orchestrated by a "Real Photo Processor" chip. It's so cunning it could sell ice cubes to Eskimos.



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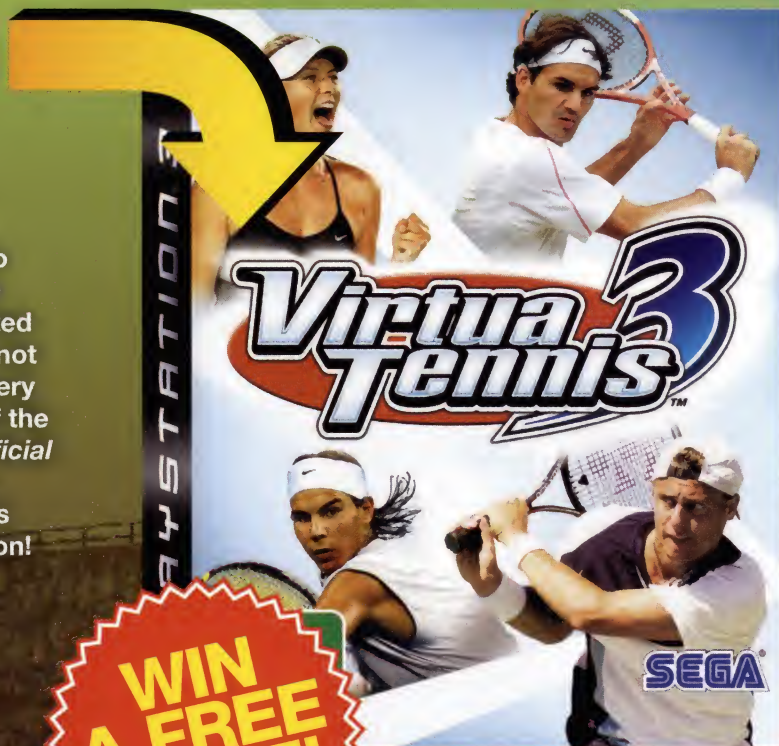
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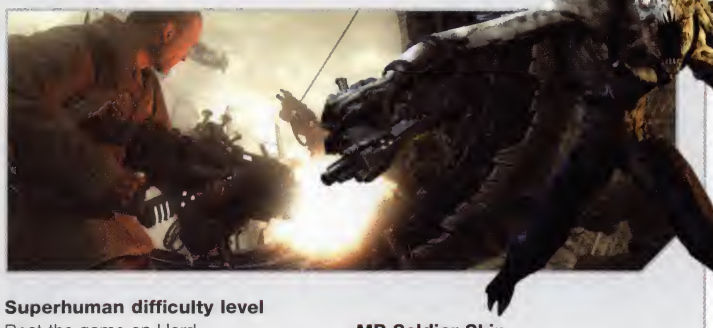
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CHEATS

Get the winning edge with *OPS*' tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN



Superhuman difficulty level

Beat the game on Hard

Concept Art Pack 1

Get 10 skill points

Concept Art Pack 2

Get 20 skill points

The Mighty Wrench (allies get a wrench)

Get 40 skill points

Flip Levels

Get 70 skill points

Clank Backpacks

Get 100 skill points

MP Mechanic Skin

Get 126 skill points

Movie Player

Beat the game

MP Soldier Skin

Beat the game on Superhuman

Black Ops Skin

Beat the game on Superhuman

Black Ops Skin with Skeleton Head

Beat the game on Superhuman with all Skill Points

Cloven Skin

Register for myresistance.net, go to "Profile" and the online code is provided

Mechanic Skin

Gain all skill points in Campaign mode

Unlockable weapons

The following guns will be unlocked as you play through the game a second time: Arc Charger, Backlash Grenade, L11-2 Dragon, Reaper and Splitter

PS3 PS2 PSP

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

Input all codes at title screen

Infinite crew charge

↓, ↑, ↑, →, ←, ←, →, ⊕

Infinite nitrous

←, ↑, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, →, ⊕

Infinite SpeedBreaker

↓, →, →, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ⊕

Unlock logo vinyls

→, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ⊕

Unlock special logo vinyls

↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑, ⊕

Aston Martin DB9 (Exotic)

Defeat Wolf in Boss Battle mode

Colin

Defeat Wolf or TFK

Dodge Charger R/T Classic (Muscle)

Defeat the 21st Street Muscle Car Gang

Jaguar XK 2007 (Exotic)

Clear all three Turf War races

Mazda RX7 (Tuner)

Defeat Kenji in Boss Battle mode

Nikki

Defeat all three beginning bosses

Nissan 240SX (Tuner)

Clear all three Checkpoint Challenges

Samson

Defeat Angie or 21st Street

Yumi

Defeat Kenji or Bushido



PS3 PS2 PSP

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

Enter these push-button codes at the screens listed

100K (Team Menu)

↑, ↑, ↑, ←, →, ←, ▶ START

All Characters (Team Menu)

↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, ←, ←, ▶ START

All Cinematics (Review Menu)

↑, ←, ←, ↑, →, →, ↑, ▶ START

All Comic Book mission courses (Comic Book missions)

↑, →, ←, ↓, ↑, →, ←, ↓, ▶ START

All Comics (Review Menu)

←, →, →, ←, ↑, ↑, →, ▶ START

All Concept Art (Review Menu)

↓, ↓, ↓, →, →, ←, ↓, ▶ START

All Costumes (Team Menu)

↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ▶ START

All Powers (Team Menu)

←, →, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ▶ START

All Wallpapers (Review Menu)

↑, ↓, →, ←, ↑, ↑, ↓, ▶ START

Filler (in-game)

←, →, →, ←, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↑, ▶ START

God Mode (in-game)

↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ▶ START

Level 99 (Team Menu)

↑, ←, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↓, →, ▶ START

Super Speed (in-game)

↑, ←, ↑, →, ↓, →, ▶ START



Touch of Death (in-game)

←, →, ↓, ↓, →, ←, ▶ START

Unlocks Daredevil (Team Menu)

←, ←, →, →, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ▶ START

Unlocks the Silver Surfer (Team Menu)

↓, ←, ←, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ▶ START



PS3 PS2 PSP

FINAL FANTASY XII



How to unlock the Sky Pirate figurines:

Ashe

Awarded for having the average party level over 50

Ba'Gamnan

Awarded for completing the hunt catalog

Balthier

Awarded for attacking 300 times

Basch

Awarded for killing 500 foes

Belias

Awarded for obtaining every esper

Carrot

Awarded for defeating Carrot

Chocobo

Awarded for walking 50,000 steps

Crystal

Awarded for obtaining every character's magics

Dalan

Awarded for completing every map

Death Gaze

Awarded for defeating the monster, Death Gaze

Fafnir

Awarded for defeating the monster, Fafnir

Fran

Awarded for using magic 200 times

Gabranth

Awarded for initiating every fusion technique

Gilgamesh

Awarded for defeating the monster, Gilgamesh

Gurdy

Awarded for using/spending 1,000,000 Gil

Hell Wurm

Awarded for defeating the monster, Devil Dragon

King Behemoth

Awarded for defeating the monster, King Behemoth

Migelo

Awarded for selling 1000 loot

Mimic

Unlock and buy all Monographs and Canopic Jar

Montblanc

Awarded for attaining a monster chain level of 50

Penelo

Awarded for getting 100,000 Gil

Rasler

Awarded for mastering all character's licence boards

Reks

Awarded for earning 500,000 clan points

Trickster

Awarded for defeating the monster, Trickster

Ultima

Awarded for defeating the esper, Ultima

Vaan

Awarded for stealing 50 times from enemies

Vayne

Awarded for using techniques 100 times

Vossler

Awarded for obtaining every character's techniques

Yazmat

Awarded for defeating the monster, Yazmat

Zodiac

Awarded for defeating the esper, Zodiac

PS3 PS2 PSP

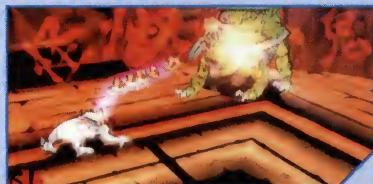
OKAMI

Invincibility

Find all 100 Stray Beads

Secret Theatre

More than 31 hours of gameplay



PS3 PS2 PSP

RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS



Bunny Costume

Complete all 12th round tests

Caramba Costume

Complete all 8th round tests

Dee-Jay Costume

Complete all 2nd round tests

Gothic Costume

Complete all 4th round tests

Raymaninho Costume

Complete all 10th round tests

Rock 'n' Roll Costume

Complete all 6th round tests

Unlock Challenge Mode

Complete Story Mode and Challenge Mode will be available

PS3 PS2 PSP

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

How to unlock secret characters:

Cunningham

Beat Cunningham on any difficulty by stamina kill and beat the game before January 1st 1971 (in-game)

Elisa

Get a Medic level of 80

Gene

Recruit 200 soldiers and stamina kill Gene all in one play-through

Major Zero

Have a MGS: Digital Graphic Novel game save on your PSP's memory stick (second play-through only)

Null

Kill Null by stamina kill or HP kill when you face him twice and beat the game

Para Medic

Contact her on the radio on the Comm Tower stage. She will later need to be rescued in the hospital stage. Place spies in the hospital

Python

Kill Python by stamina kill

Raikov

Place spies in Western Wilderness before clearing the Guard House mission. Afterwards you should get a report of a handsome prisoner being held there

Sigint

After Snake is captured and rescued you can contact Sigint on the radio at the Comm stage. He will need to be rescued in the town

Sokolov

Give the Saturn V blueprints to Sokolov

Teliko

Have a MGA game save on your PSP's memory stick (second play-through only)

Ursula

Have a Medic level of over 80, with the second number as an odd number

Venus

Have a MGA2 game save on your PSP's memory stick (second play-through only)



NEXT

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON!

STAR WARS

OPS visits LucasArts' studio to report on the incredibly ambitious, fully destructible and totally top secret *Star Wars* game! Trust us, this game defines next gen!



- 15 new PS3 launch reviews including *MotorStorm*, *Oblivion*, *F.E.A.R.*, *Rainbow Six Vegas* and more!
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42739



29330



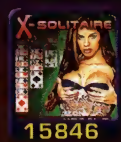
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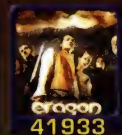
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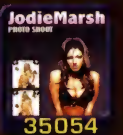
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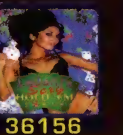
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42243



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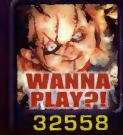
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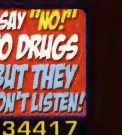
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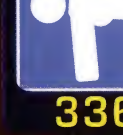
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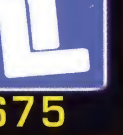
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36255	36240	THE KILLERS	When You Were Young
40767	40755	AKON/EMINEM	Smack That
36947	36936	BEYONCE	Irreplaceable
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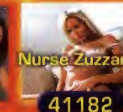
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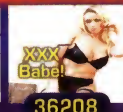
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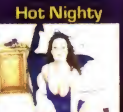
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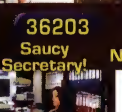
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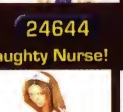
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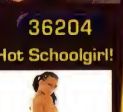
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30013



42376



42707



36614



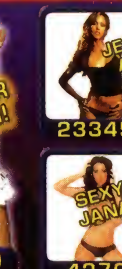
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